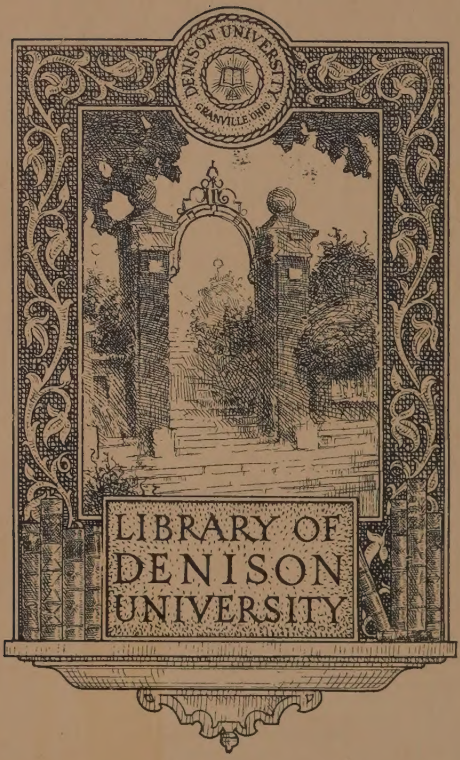
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THE LIMITATIONS OF VICTORY . .

THE LIMITATIONS OF VICTORY

BY

ALFRED FABRE-LUCE

TRANSLATED BY

CONSTANCE VESEY

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NEW YORK
ALFRED · A · KNOPF
1926

Printed in Great Britain by
UNWIN BROTHERS, LIMITED, LONDON AND WOKING
Published in the original French
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PREFACE

In the year 1922, the author of this volume published a work on Anglo-French relations since the war. Since its appearance events and the writer's own views have quite outstripped the opinions expressed in that work, and no further editions of it will appear. When it was written, he thought that if the French Government and Parliament plainly recognized the International difficulties, as well as the certain benefits of a more modest and realist policy, and the advantages of a direct Franco-German agreement, they might yet abandon the perilous course on which they had embarked, before too late. But this was too much to expect of reason, powerless as it was in the vortex of illusion, hatred, and pride, which succeeded the Great War. The evolution was in the opposite direction, and the end of it is that general ruin, latent war, and the decline of western civilization are no longer empty words.

The very gravity of these perils shows that the matter is not merely one to be dealt with by experts; other remedies must be sought. In making it a political question we are not going far enough; it must be raised to the moral plane. What has brought about a state of mind in France which has prevented our realizing the fruits of our victory? The more closely the author considered the peace problems he thought could be studied in the abstract, the more he realized that many reasonable solutions were objected to on principles derived from pre-war history. And, at the same time, he discovered that this history has never been honestly written, that even now it is nothing but propaganda, and that impartial study of the documentary evidence, in a new spirit, leads to conclusions very different from those which have been hammered into docile minds by successive Governments, in censorship and court-martial

days. It is this work of intellectual emancipation that he now asks the reader to resume with him. He believes that the time has come to tell the country all the truth, and that the problem of International relations must be considered as a whole, from its first inception, or else the effort to solve it must be abandoned. Consequently the length of the first part of this book will readily be understood. Either victory is merely a delusion, or—as to this we all agree—it may be defined, in the first place, as the possibility, more or less prolonged, of preventing the recurrence of war. But how can this result be achieved without a clear comprehension of the past? Proudhon said that men would never abolish war until they understood it, and, in truth, after studying it with a view to understanding, the precarious and troubled peace inaugurated in 1919 appears to be largely the issue of the legend as to the origins of the war, or rather the price paid for it. Consequently it has been possible to deal more briefly with this second phase. The author has not thought it necessary to enter into the futile conferences between the allied negotiators. He has preferred dealing directly with the possible solutions, and showing why they were defeated.

A work of this kind, consisting to a great extent of criticism of the French Government's actions, at a time when they claimed to represent the nation, and their policy was, in fact, passively endorsed by the people, may shock many honest scruples. In the closing chapter of this book the author has endeavoured to reply to these scruples, and to show that the first duty, the very foundation of patriotic feeling, lies in free criticism. All those who refuse to permit their feelings entirely to govern their opinions, and who love their country well enough to desire that Reason should be at once its servant and its creator, will surely rally to the author's side in this debate. As to the others, the certainty of their taking umbrage has not seemed to him sufficient reason for silence, for the hostility it evokes is often the measure of the novelty and utility of a work. At any rate, the existence of so much honest prejudice has compelled him to observe the strictest courtesy and impartiality, and he has made it a

rule, particularly in the first part of the book, never to give his own point of view without giving the arguments appealed to by the other side to justify the "orthodox" point of view, whenever they seemed to him at all reasonable, and quoting the sources, in discussing important matters, so that all who wish to do so may be able to compare the book with the original texts, and satisfy themselves of its impartiality.

One last remark, on a question of form. It has been found necessary to deal occasionally with different aspects of the same question, or different events which occurred during the same period, in separate chapters; and, on the other hand, sometimes to refer to a passage or conclusion in several different places in the book. The reader is asked to make kind allowance for these inevitable defects, and to recognize that they have been avoided as far as possible.

I

THE GENESIS OF THE WAR

I

THE CONTROVERSY

Recollections of 1914.

A few startling communications, each seeming to depose to Germany's bellicose intentions, are what the general public chiefly remember of the events of July 1914: Austria's harsh ultimatum to Serbia, backed up by Germany; the rejection of a Conference and of arbitration, to Jaurès the very thing which would point to culpability; the declaration of war on Russia, preceded by an ultimatum that it was impossible to accept; the summons to Belgium, and finally the declaration of war on France, made on false pretences. Each of these facts caused surprise in turn, and contributed to weigh down the scale against Germany, whilst their rapid succession suggested premeditation.

The War and the Origins of the War.

The first revelations of the war seemed in themselves so many charges against Germany. Was not the invasion of Belgium, whose neutrality she had guaranteed, proof in itself of the culpable designs the Empire was secretly pursuing? The discovery of this hypocrisy roused suspicion of everything the Germans did. The excesses practised by the invaders revealed a latent cruelty in the race which was put down to their past. The unprepared state of the French army, the confused nature of its concentration, the sudden and unduly delayed change of plan, and the first reverses in Belgium, all seemed to show that the authorities had been taken by surprise, and had not

expected a campaign in the north. Thus, even the mistakes made by our General Staff were of service to our propaganda.

As usual, the German Government made matters worse by their gaucherie. The Chancellor spoke of a solemn treaty as "a scrap of paper", appealing to a "necessity which knows no law", and these exclamations, dissociated from his distracted state of mind and his wrath, and magnified by translation, seemed to proclaim criminal principles. Then again, how curiously he defended his case! How his defence varied according to opportunity or his feelings! He said that he did not believe in war, and then tried to prove that his enemies made it inevitable by their acts. On the 30th of July, he stated, at a meeting of the Prussian Cabinet, that Germany and England had worked together unceasingly for the maintenance of peace. On the 4th of August he allowed the same statement to be published in a White Book which was hurriedly drawn up and published. Then, war having been declared, he imputed all the blame to the British Government. "England is responsible for the massacre that is going on", is what he said in December 1915. Such bitterness on the part of an Anglophil could only be compared with the resentment of a lover who has been deceived. He could not even be relied upon with regard to essential facts. Up to the time of the conclusion of peace he denied the existence of the understanding between Germany and Austria prior to the despatch of the ultimatum to Serbia. This medley of falsehoods, combined with the accusations made by a few disgusted Germans, and the discovery of documents whose contents were either deciphered or revealed through indiscretion, confirmed the French view; disseminated by the Press as food for public opinion, they sustained the combatants' determination to win the war, and rallied foreign sympathies to them. *The theory of Germany's sole culpability, first propagated in order to gain allies, was subsequently strengthened by their intervention,* for each one that entered the lists was interested in proving that the cause thus espoused was just. The successive declarations of war reinforced the anti-German theory, and served as proofs. Did not the arbiters themselves, the most neutral of neutrals, those most concerned

with ethical considerations, take part in the strife? President Wilson's intervention indicated that the moral forces had been definitely won over.

The German Revolution.

The loss of the war in 1918 *was a final blow to the enemy propaganda, and this time it struck home.* The Empire was so compact, the popular errors had been so well hedged in by absolutism and the blockade, that everything the people had believed in was shattered by the blow. The army was not invincible, the Emperor was not a great man—in that case, we must be responsible for the war! This is what they said to one another then. It even seemed that it was the first time the idea that they could be responsible had occurred to the German mind. Vague consciousness of a foreign menace, the appeal made by the Government, and the necessity for defending the country, had sufficed to keep up the morale of the people until then.

This docility was succeeded by complete moral disorganization in 1918. The German Socialists opened the archives and showed up the culprits; in order to dissociate themselves the more effectively from the old régime, they threw all the blame on to it, thinking that the more fault they found with the Hohenzollerns, whom they had driven out, the more chance Germany would have of revival, as a blameless republic. Their admissions were prompted as much by self-interest as by consciousness of the wrong they had done. Contrition would facilitate a Wilsonian peace; regret for the past was essential to their plans for the future. These were the factors which led to the formation of a Majority composed of Democrats and Socialists, who acknowledged that Germany and Austria were mainly responsible for the world-war.

The Versailles Treaty.

At the Peace Conference, the German delegation, whilst substituting imprudence and precipitation for the accusations of "will for war" and premeditation, admitted that the

attitude of the German Government at the Hague Conferences, and during the "twelve days", had contributed to the disaster. At that moment the moral triumph of the allies had reached its zenith. It was great enough to allow of the theory of Germany's responsibility being incorporated in the Versailles Treaty, and connected with the reparations. Article 231 states that "Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments have been subjected, as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies".

The Campaign for the Rehabilitation of Germany.

It could hardly be supposed that the triumph would be final. The theory of Germany's responsibility was weakened by the mere fact of its being affirmed in the Treaty, for the fate of the latter would be bound up with it. The severity of its clauses would incite the Germans to use every weapon at their disposal against it, and the victors seemed to have afforded them a means of sapping its very foundations. Well fed and well treated, our enemies might have accepted a comfortable culpability,—starving, it was essential that they should be innocent. And then the Parties of the Left, having made a mistake in their calculations and imperilled their prestige, were not strong enough to stand by the interested admission they had made in 1919.

The future was to react in yet another way on the past. The vigorous policy the Treaty encouraged France to adopt would influence history; some would regard it as the continuation of an aggressive pre-war policy which it would suggest to their minds. Former habits of scientific inquiry were being resumed, now that the war was over. The historians were coming into their own again. Face to face with the contest, they instantly noted that the combatants were not equally armed. On one side documents handed over without any reserve, the intrigues and secret thoughts of those at the helm revealed to all. On the other, power to select the documents for publication at will, and keep back anything that might be inconsistent

with the official statements. What more natural than to assume that the favourable documents were published, and that those kept back were evidence for the prosecution? It is but a step from that to declaring that the world now takes an exaggerated view of the German responsibility, that Germany has made her confession, and that the Allies still have to make theirs, that the future will clear Germany by showing that her enemies had projects and ambitions similar to her own.

Ever since 1919 Germany has maintained that the documents which fell into her hands through the chances of the campaign support her contention. The German army occupied Brussels: the Belgian diplomats' reports were published, and they speak of the French *revanche* spirit, of the pacific tendencies of Germany. The Austrian army occupied Belgrade: consequently we learnt something of the Pan-Slav intrigues. A revolution took place in Russia, and her former Ministers were arraigned: the Sukhomlinov trial supplied information with regard to the Russian mobilization; publication of the archives will follow. These are the main foundations on which the reply of the four German historians to the memorandum of the allied experts at Versailles is based. *From that moment a reactionary movement set in.* Publication of the Wilhelmstrasse secret documents, which were ready in May, was delayed: Schücking and Montgelas were associated with Kautsky and revised his work. In June 1919, instead of this integral publication, a White Book was first issued, its object being to acquit the former Government, for whom Brockdorff-Rantzau had already pleaded extenuating circumstances. In 1921, at the London Conference, Simons only admitted "mitigated responsibility". From 1922 onwards, after the publication of the *Livre Noir* by the Soviet Government, the propaganda with a view to rehabilitating Germany was intensified, and was openly countenanced by successive Governments, including that of Wirth, who nevertheless declared himself in favour of carrying out the Treaty. A feeling in support of this protest spread beyond the German frontiers. *Did not the vanquished nations seem to have the advantage of the moral*

position? They proposed in turn integral publication of all the documents, setting up an impartial Committee of Enquiry, free discussion between historians—and it was always the Allies who refused. As far as they were concerned, it was a question which had already been settled, and these propositions looked to them like a first attempt on the part of their enemies to evade their obligations.

But impartial observers consider that honest-minded men ought not to adhere on principle to ideas formed at a time when the sources of information were not accessible and there was no freedom of conscience; they oppose to a hard-and-fast opinion, adopted too early, a more liberal view, in keeping with recent revelations. The integral publication by the Soviet Government of the telegrams exchanged in July 1914 has proved that diplomatic documents officially published by the Allies were falsified, and inclines them to think that they too have not such a very clear conscience. An impartial committee has been set up at the Hague to study the origins of the war, and the result of its investigations seems to favour the theory of divided responsibility. This view is rapidly gaining ground outside France, particularly in English and American intellectual circles. In the autumn of 1923, the elections in England brought a Party into power, for the first time, which had always upheld it. A few weeks later, Stresemann made a speech in which he said that the truth with regard to responsibility for the war was gradually coming to light.

How the Propaganda Varied.

Our object is to investigate the question, and decide how far this change of feeling can be justified. But before dealing with the evidence, it is only fair to point out that in every country the official and patriotic view has undergone important modifications in the course of the last few years, and that *it has never been possible to keep up the propaganda on its war basis.* In 1919, we saw the German delegates at one and the same time trying to make excuses for Germany's having come into the war and avoid offending

the susceptibilities of the victors, denouncing Russia, who was not represented, and declaring that Germany had no further reason for going to war now that her Imperialist system had been overthrown. Then we saw the German protest vary in direct proportion to French pressure, and culminate with the occupation of the Ruhr, thus almost amounting to a sublimation of political and economic necessities. We saw Austrians, like Gooss and Czernin, exonerating Germany: this was because the Austro-Hungarian Empire was irreparably broken up, whilst Germany was recovering, and the future of Germanism was in Berlin, whose face had to be saved. On the other hand, we saw the Allies assuming, in spite of the revelations of the archives, that there was a pacific tendency in Austria on the eve of the war, in order to strengthen the case against Germany. Finally we saw the French defence discreetly shifted, according to the successive adverse revelations and the variations in the diplomatic situation. Isvolsky's reports were published in Moscow, and they attributed incautious remarks to Poincaré; but Tsarist Russia had perished, and Isvolsky was no more. By sacrificing the dead it was still possible to save the French Government: Poincaré no longer tried to prove the joint innocence of the Allies, as before, but blamed the Russian Ambassador.

The Debate in the French Chamber.

The feeling roused in France by these controversies—or Poincaré's scruples—was strong enough to lead to a debate in the Chamber in July 1922—a debate the announcement of which would have very much surprised Frenchmen in 1919. The fact that the discussion was to end in a vote of confidence is sufficient to enable us to judge of its value. The result having been secured in advance, it was merely a question of justifying it to the public. There was a moment when an allusion was made to facts, but Viviani immediately interrupted, mixed up the dates in an eloquent speech, and brought the discussion back to the electoral plane. This debate left a confused impression, a vague feeling that the French theory was shaken, without, however,

its being possible to find anything in the Opposition speeches sufficient to justify these doubts.

The question must be raised again in another place and calmer atmosphere, and dealt with more precisely, first of all in the higher interest of truth, but also for reasons that purely concern France. We have ourselves mixed up the problem of responsibility for the war with our present-day policy, and we have made it the main-spring of our propaganda in foreign countries. It is quite evident that the latter cannot be carried on now with any chance of success unless it is considerably modified. Moreover, by adapting the national theory to the historical truth we shall merely be openly continuing an evolution which has already begun secretly. Finally, we must surely answer the silent interrogation of all who are possessed of some historical culture and who see only too clearly that the official statements do not coincide with the real facts. To reply that they must choose between patriotism and conscience would confront the chosen few who insure the continuity of patriotism by the transmission of traditions with too great a dilemma, it would be depriving the guardians of the sacred fire of their faith.

The Versailles Verdict.

For convenience sake, we will go back to the Peace Conference, taking the accusation made against Germany as the starting point of our enquiry. To be quite honest, the report presented by the Allied experts is not a very brilliant justification of their theory. It is limited to the events of July 1914, making no mention of anything that occurred during the whole preceding period, except the disputed conversation between King Albert and Moltke. The references are to documents of very little value, such as the Mühlon and Lichnowsky reports, and it speaks of a "Council of July 5th", which never took place, as a "decisive deliberation". It entirely ignores the question of the mobilizations. It states, contrary to the evidence, that Austria was prepared to pause "at a sign". And we shall have occasion to note a good many other mistakes. *Nevertheless, the document clearly indicates the three vulnerable*

points of the Imperial policy in July 1914*: Austro-German complicity against Serbia; the refusal of a Conference; and the initiative in declaring war.*

A great deal of the German answer, as given in Brockdorff-Rantzau's speech of the 7th of May, 1919, in his note of the 13th of May, and in the memorandum by the four historians, which he handed to the Conference, seems at first, to anyone looking for a definite refutation of the charges, like evasion. It endeavours to substitute a philosophic for a political problem; it begins by denying that the German people, who thought they were fighting a defensive war, were in any way responsible; and then, instead of discriminating between the mistakes made by the Government and a far more extensive error, it tries to make the Imperialist morality of pre-war Europe accountable for their policy. We shall have to enquire into the value of these considerations later on. In this first part of our quest we only propose to find out what reply Germany has been able to make to the three definite accusations brought against her by the Allies, in 1919 and since.

Literature on the Origins of the War.

A wide field (or rather jungle!) lies open to our enquiry. Amongst the innumerable authors who have written on the origins of the war, there are very few who inspire confidence;[1] for the most part they are paid advocates, public men anxious to save their reputations, systematic opponents, hypnotized by the responsibilities of their own Government to the point of not seeing those of other Governments, ignorant megalomaniacs who tackle great subjects just as fools write to kings. One comes across a

[1] In France, an exception must be made in favour of Renouvin. This historian, who is always scrupulously exact in relating facts, has achieved a laudable effort to reconcile his statements with the official theory, but has not been nearly as successful in doing so as he seems to think. We should also like to pay a tribute, from another point of view, to Renauld and the Socialist writers who have exposed a certain number of official falsehoods. In Germany, Montgelas's *Leitfaden* (English edition, *The Case for the Central Powers*, Allen and Unwin) is a valuable book, but written from a party point of view. Absolute objectivity will only be found in the remarkable works of a few American historians: Sydney Fay, Schmitt and Barnes.

few scholars, certainly, and a few honest men, but, as a rule, they decline to commit themselves to any opinion, on the ground that the documents are not all available ; they appeal to the distant judgment of history, and until that can be pronounced they simply cling to the thesis of their own Government, although they are fully aware of its errors ; they say that they are waiting for the time when everything can be made known, but in reality they are hoping for the time when everything can be said ; and there is a little cowardice in the hesitation to speak out which they would have us attribute to their honest scruples . . . the works stretch out their tentacles like octopuses. They want to form a party, excluding all independent thought. In reading them one must always be on one's guard, like the King, Jean le Bon.

For that matter, an experienced reader very soon sees the traps laid for him, which are always of the same nature. *All the assertions capable of impressing him are dished up, without inquiry into the authority of their authors, and without first examining the arguments in support of them.* The utmost is made, on the one hand, of the works of a little group of French Royalists, and, on the other, of those written by Pan-Germanists, which no one reads. The public and private utterances and manifestoes of absolute sovereigns and responsible heads of Governments are thrown into the scale, and the refutations of perfectly extravagant statements made by the enemy are assumed to be so many proofs of innocence. A number of insignificant facts of the same nature are strung together, and the reader, either forgetting or not being aware of the series of unimportant facts which tell the other way, succumbs to the weight of evidence, and meekly accepts the presumption. Meetings between heads of States, armaments, and mobilizations, are represented as provocation in the case of the enemy and a reply in the case of the friend. When it suits them, precautionary measures are regarded as signs of an irrevocable decision; interviews become Conferences, Cabinet meetings Councils of War, warnings are spoken of as ultimatums. Efforts in the direction of " Europeanization " are acts of peace—or attempts to

break up the alliances, concessions made point to irreproachable intentions—or to being insufficiently prepared for war, as the case may be. Military manœuvres, matters which give rise to uneasiness, audacious or discouraging utterances, diplomats' suspicions, which pervade even the most peaceful periods, are all put together and brought forward as proofs. A methodically arranged, compact collection of officially selected documents, calculated to encourage a particular tendency, is published from the archives, which, as everyone knows, are full of contradictory information and Utopian views. *In stating facts, hypotheses that have been considered are constantly confused with resolutions taken, causes with effects, and events related by historians with those known to politicians.* Essential statements are vaguely worded in order to facilitate the grouping of heterogeneous acts under their ægis. We are shown that Germany was in favour of war between Austria and Serbia, and are told that she wanted "war", no distinction being made between general and local war, in the hope that the reader will not see the difference between the two hypotheses. An official report is produced, showing that England intended landing troops in Belgium, in case of war, even without the consent of the Belgian Government—and this is spoken of as "invasion", no mention being made of the fact that this intervention would have had to be preceded by German aggression. In this way the adversary's actions, always considered apart from their justification, seem gratuitous and provocative.

The Evidence.

The actors in the drama, whose memoirs have been published, have taken even greater liberties in choosing their arguments. There is no need to consider those selected by the Germans: no one dreams of relying on the evidence of men charged with crimes, who are fighting for their lives. But the evidence which has been collected in France is hardly more satisfactory for the purpose of an historical review. Very few flagrant untruths can be detected, but there are perpetual tendencious interpretations, exact quotations of

statements which are open to dispute, omissions and preteritions, and arbitrary conclusions.

Poincaré's book and his speeches [1] are the best example of these tactics. Not a single inaccurate statement. But the author enlarges complacently on Germany's last Moroccan intrigues (of no importance, seeing that possible disputes had been referred in advance to arbitration), whilst he is silent as regards the Pan-Slav intrigues which played a preponderating rôle in unchaining the war. He says that it is " pure falsehood " to say that French foreign policy was modified after the fall of the Caillaux Government, and yet the change was emphasized by all the foreign ambassadors whose reports have been published. He omits to mention the agreement reached between him and Isvolsky as to recalling Georges Louis, and only mentions Jonnart's decision, as something quite new. He tries to show, contrary to the evidence, that the Central Empires delayed sending the ultimatum to Serbia, for fear of the pacific influence he (Poincaré) might exert in Petersburg. He assures us that, when leaving Russia, he had no presentiment of what was coming, and yet Paléologue tells us that he foretold a " *coup de théatre* " on the part of Austria and that war was freely discussed by those about him.

Coming to the history of the mobilizations, he only gives the date on which the telegrams from our ambassadors were received, in this way avoiding any allusion to the question of priority. Viviani goes farther, and does not hesitate to alter the facts.[2] He antedates the German decision to mobilize by two days, and post-dates the Russian decision by one, so as to make it appear a reply to the German and Austrian measures; and in order to prove that, on the 31st of July, the Kaiser was still unaware of the Tsar's decision, he quotes two telegrams addressed by him to George V. and Nicholas II., the one expressly mentioning the Russian general mobilization and the other, sent later, alluding to it very plainly.

[1] *Les Origines de la Guerre*, and speech of July 1922 in the Chamber.
[2] *Réponse au Kaiser*, and speech of July 1922 in the Chamber.

Possibility of a Reply.

When the depositions of the best qualified witnesses are of this nature, it can be understood that it is sometimes very difficult to arrive at the truth. But it is not, in our opinion, at all impossible. It is no doubt very desirable that the documents should be published in full, but those which have been published throw a good deal of light on those which are still kept secret, and *from now we think it possible to form a clear and definite opinion of the policies pursued.* The first thing is to decide which are the essential questions of the preliminary inquiry, and to discriminate accordingly between the arguments, so that the discussion may be kept to the point. When once the question has been correctly put, it is almost always possible to establish the truth by comparing the documentary evidence. And is it not already evident to those who can read that it is gradually becoming apparent to all historians? Very often the very liveliness of their controversies only seems intended to disguise a more profound unanimity.

II

PRIMARY FACTS

Serbia's Responsibility.

The murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand by Bosniac students at Sarajevo, on the 28th of June, 1914, was the origin of the crisis.

Was the Serbian Government responsible for this? In order to dispel any misunderstanding, it should be said at once that the Austrian Government never contemplated establishing the existence of *direct* complicity on the part of the Belgrade Government. As early as on the 5th of July, Francis-Joseph thought it would probably be impossible to prove this complicity,[1] and, indeed, eleven days later, after the Austrian enquiry, Wiesner stated in his report that there was "no evidence of it" and that there were, on the contrary, circumstances which pointed to the necessity of excluding this hypothesis. But the Emperor also wrote that "the policy pursued in Belgrade, aiming at union of all the South Slavs under the Serbian flag, encouraged crimes of this nature, and constituted a permanent danger". Consequently it was a question of political responsibility, and this is how Count Berchtold regarded it when he tried to justify the Dual Monarchy's determination to the Powers.

Now Austria's right to apologies and atonement on these grounds has been recognized by all the European statesmen, particularly by Poincaré and Sazonov; it was vindicated by the result of the inquiry, which showed that

[1] German Documents (so-called Kautsky Documents, edited by Count Max Montgelas and Professor Walther Schücking, translated by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Division of International Law). No. 13.

the crime was organized with the help of Serbian officers and officials and inspired by the " Black Hand ", an anti-Austrian secret society, recognized and encouraged by the Serbian Government; and, finally, the reports sent by Austrian agents at Nish, Uskub, and Belgrade, of the demonstrations of joy and defiance which followed on the news of the murder, strengthened the conviction in Vienna that the Serbian people were giving the murderers their moral support. It was necessary to make this initial state of the question clear, because it will help to explain the Austro-Hungarian Government's insistence that the Austro-Serbian dispute was of a purely political and private nature, and their refusal to admit the legal and European considerations Russia tried to introduce into the discussion.

The Sarajevo Crime and Austria's Policy.

The point which calls for discussion is rather whether Austria's genuine and legitimate indignation did not provide more deep-laid designs with the opportunity sought?

The Sarajevo murder and its possible consequences are only mentioned at the end of the letter sent by Francis-Joseph to William II., on the 5th of July, as an annex to the memorandum he attached to it. Both documents give details of a diplomatic plan of action in the Balkans, which had been worked out some weeks earlier. Repression of the unforeseen crime merely forms part of this scheme, but it gives it a fresh character. Ever since the signature of the Bucharest treaty, which was considered very advantageous to Russia, the Ballplatz had been preparing to avenge it. The methods by which they hoped to achieve their aim were set forth in the memorandum as follows: conclusion of a treaty with Bulgaria, who had proposed an alliance several times, and thus impressing King Carol, and cementing the bonds of alliance between Austria and Rumania, which had been relaxed during the last few years; in short, the formation of a Balkan League, similar to the one inspired by Russia in 1912, but with contrary aims and more direct Austrian participation.

This project was not originally directed against Serbia.

The initial text, drafted in May by the Foreign Office officials, even anticipated a *rapprochement* with her, through the medium of Rumania; but this passage was struck out by Berchtold, towards the end of June, for, after the Tsar's visit to Constanza, he lost confidence in the latter Power. The original memorandum did not contemplate more than diplomatic action in the Balkans, and this was only suggested as a defence against the Triple Entente. But after the murder it was more harshly worded. There was no longer any question of merely encircling Serbia, but of "eliminating her as a political factor". Moreover, the direct operation contemplated against her still remained a means to a diplomatic end; by restoring Austria's prestige it would facilitate the break up of the alliances Vienna desired. The impression made on the Balkan States by the victory would be so great that they would fall into the Austrian net like ripe fruit. The issue is therefore quite clear. *Recourse to military action was not contemplated before the 28th of June, and even after that date the aim in view was not a European war.*

Opinion in Vienna and Berlin on the Chances of War.

It will be said that this is merely a quibble. The plan in question would tend to alter the balance of power in Europe, and there were certain Powers who would not agree to this alteration. The real question is what view was held as to this by those at the head of affairs in the Central Empires. *Did they appreciate the danger? If so, they were thoroughly to blame. If not, they were merely imprudent and blustering. Their responsibility was in inverse ratio to their foresight.* It seems that some distinction must be made as regards this between the two allies. At the Cabinet Council in Vienna, on the 7th of July, Berchtold said plainly that "he was convinced that a passage of arms with Serbia might lead to war with Russia,[1] and that the risk must be taken. Berchtold himself, writing after the war, tells us why he accepted it so "light-heartedly", and his explana-

[1] Supplement to the Austrian Red Book (English translation, Allen and Unwin), I, No. 8.

tion is confirmed by Czernin : the Austrian Minister, wrongly advised by Berlin, counted absolutely on England's neutrality, and reckoned on the certainty of the Central Empires being victorious in a war "*à quatre*". No doubt, as Windischgraetz states, and Dumaine believed, this confidence in the chances of war was not unmixed with a vague hope that "at the last moment everyone would be afraid, and that nothing would happen"[1]; his volatile mind was always full of conflicting opinions. Germany, too, was prepared to take the risk of a general war. After hesitating for no longer than it took to get through lunch, the Kaiser gave Count Szögyény this assurance, but at the same time he stated his belief that "Russia was not ready for war at the moment, and would certainly very much hesitate to take up arms".[2] He said the same thing in private interviews with a few officers he sent for in turn, before he left for Norway. His words to the captain of the *Zenker* were : "The Tsar will not side with regicides ; moreover, neither Russia, nor France, who is short of heavy artillery, are ready for war". To General Bertrab he said : "The Sarajevo crime will not involve serious complications".[3] He told them that he had promised Francis-Joseph his whole-hearted support, and that it was consequently necessary to be prepared for the possibility of war, but he did not think it sufficiently probable for there to be any need to recall the heads of the army, or to take any military measures.

Thus Berlin seemed more optimistic as regards the chances of European peace than Vienna ; *the possibility of war was faced, and even accepted, without apprehension, but just as a gambler faces the risk of losing in the background of his mind and trusts to luck. Such ready acquiescence, showing so little consciousness of the danger, might not have stood the test of realities, some hesitation might have been shown in acting on the threat, the determination might have turned out to be mere bluff. It should also be noted that the war contemplated was one between the Triple Alliance and*

[1] *My Memoirs*, by Prince Ludwig Windischgraetz (Allen and Unwin).
[2] Supplement to the Red Book, I., No. 6.
[3] German Documents. Supplement.

France and Russia, not a war in which the Triple Entente would be fighting Germany and Austria-Hungary.

Was Localization Possible?

The Allied propaganda has always maintained that Germany's policy of "localization" could not have been sincere, because the whole world, including Berlin, had long been aware of the ties which existed between Russia and Serbia. And, in fact, it was very well known in Germany that the Slav world would not look on unmoved at an invasion of Serbia; those responsible counted less on its indifference than on favourable diplomatic circumstances and the weakness of the Russian Government. They thought that Russia's domestic strife and the disorganized state of the army would be sufficient to prevent the authorities from falling in with the wishes of the Pan-Slavists and running the risk of war. They also believed that one condition was necessary to secure her neutrality, namely, rapidity of action.[1] If the Serbian affair were settled without delay, there would not be time for public opinion to be roused and to carry the Government with it, or for military intrigues and foreign influence to affect the position. On the other hand, Austria would profit by the spirit of sympathy which was so clearly shown in Europe immediately after the murder, and the atmosphere would be hostile to Russia, who would find no allies. In short, before she could decide to intervene in spite of this, she would be confronted with a *fait accompli* and reassured by a promise of territorial *désintéressement*. The Tsar would then be able to restrain the bellicose elements in his *entourage* as in 1912.[1]

We have clear proof that this calculation may have been made and that those who advocated precipitate action may at the same time have been partisans of peace, for we know that Tisza, who certainly did not wish for a general conflagration, and who said, in his report to the Emperor on the 1st of July, that it would take place "in the most

[1] See Yellow Book, *Les Affaires Balkaniques*, telegram from Georges Louis.

unfavourable circumstances possible",[1] afterwards strongly urged rapid and vigorous action. Moreover, the precedent of 1908 was eminently calculated to encourage Austria and Germany. Aehrenthal told the Delegations after that crisis that, "if the annexation had not been carried out with such decision, there would have been military complications". Finally, did not the French and Russian representatives in Vienna share and thus countenance Germany's mistaken view? Schebeko suggested Russia's conceding Austria the right to a temporary occupation of Belgrade, in consideration of the provocation received. The Austrian Red Book, quoted by our Ambassador himself, says: "M. Dumaine feels sure that Russia has not made up her mind to intervene forcibly on behalf of Serbia . . . and will not give her anything more than moral support. If we went to war with the Serbs, Russia would not take an active part in the strife; her efforts would be mainly directed towards localizing the war."[2] If these forecasts had been realized, what a happy and peaceful success! What a fine thing to announce to the Parliaments! Even if war had to come later on, it would at least be waged under better conditions: closer alliance between Austria and Germany, the Austro-Rumanian alliance revived, the Bulgarian alliance assured, and Serbia weakened.

Here we find the maintenance of peace associated with the fate of an Imperialist venture, and sought at the same time as the success of the latter. It was a bold scheme (like all those which have made the reputation of great politicians), but it was not a plan of aggression. A distinction of this kind would not justify us in absolving Germany. It merely warrants our pointing out that the Berlin Government had not anticipated active opposition to their plan, that consequently it was impossible to decide what attitude they would have adopted in that case, and that by omitting to take advantage of the chance this gave them of making a skilful move the adversaries may have incurred some responsibility themselves.

[1] Supplement to the Red Book, I., No. 2.
[2] Dumaine, *La Dernière Ambassade de France en Autriche.*

Austro-German Relations prior to Receipt of Serbian Reply.

The very levity with which Germany encouraged Austria, and the want of precision in the authority she gave her, are a proof of the illusions cherished by the Wilhelmstrasse. During the whole of the first fortnight in June the German Government showed no curiosity either as to the form of the Austrian reprisals, or their possible consequences, or as to the Austrian aims. The Kaiser was away, the Chancellor was taking a holiday, and there was very little correspondence between Vienna and Berlin: Germany was relying on an ally she despised. This strange negligence and the advice to take energetic steps which was combined with it, have been considered proof of the Empire's bellicose designs. But the real secret of this attitude was only anxiety to preserve peace between the Great Powers, in spite of the action taken.

Contrary to Tschirschky's opinion, Bethmann-Hollweg thought it better that Austria's intentions should not be communicated to her allies, and he urged the despatch of the ultimatum; this was because he considered "localization" dependent on secrecy and rapidity of action. He complained of Austria's irresolution, fearing that it would only encourage her enemies to go to war, yet, at the last moment, he agreed to the idea of delaying the ultimatum; like Berchtold, he was afraid that Poincaré might encourage the Russian war party. He went so far as to hasten the Austrian declaration of war, but always with the same object. Szögyény wrote on the 25th: "It is considered advisable in Berlin that no time should be lost in carrying out the military operations, in order to guard against the danger of interference on the part of a third Power."[1] From the first the Chancellor would not give Austria any specific undertaking, hoping in this way to retain his liberty of action with a view to eventual mediation. Then he did his best to conceal, even from his ambassadors, the approval Germany had shown in the first instance of the Austrian *démarche*; he wanted to avoid giving it too much import-

[1] German Documents, No. 213.

ance, thus suggesting the existence of an aggressive *bloc* in the centre of Europe, which would call for a counterpoise. In short, all the steps he took and his manœuvres, in spite of their apparent inconsistency, were perfectly consistent with the telegram sent by Jagow to Tschirschky: "Our wish is to localize the conflict, under any circumstances."

German Illusions.

Thus Germany's policy was based on a double mistake: she thought that the Triple Entente would acquiesce in it, and that if not she would still be able to exert a conciliatory influence on Austria in time.

The German illusions, kept up by the Ambassadors' reports as to the general feeling in Europe, persisted until the 29th of July. *As regards England*—Admiral Behnke telegraphed on the 22nd to ask whether the Fleet ought not to be recalled, in view of the possibility of an immediate English attack. Bethmann-Hollweg replied in the negative.[1] On the 25th, the latter telegraphed to the Emperor that, from what Lichnowsky reported, it might be assumed that Grey, "at all events for the moment, was not contemplating England's taking direct part in a European war, and wished to do everything possible to localize the Austro-Serbian conflict",[2] and he again advised the Fleet not being recalled. On the 26th King George V. said to Prince Henry of Prussia: "We shall remain neutral, and try to keep out of this as long as possible."[3] When Sazonov spoke of the possibility of England's intervening, William II. wrote the same day on the margin of the report giving an account of this conversation: "He is mistaken." And Jagow told Jules Cambon that he was "sure England would remain neutral".

As regards Russia—On the 23rd Pourtalès described Poincaré's "very cool reception" in Petersburg, and reported strikes which had "become very extensive". On the 26th he announced that Sazonov's attitude was rather less confident, and that he was looking for some way out.[4]

[1] German Documents, No. 116.
[2] Ibid., No. 182.
[3] Ibid., No. 368.
[4] Ibid., No. 238.

On the 27th he thought him "conciliatory" and "his criticisms much weaker". On the 28th he still spoke of troubles in the Russian capital, and added that there was little enthusiasm for the war, and that public opinion was dejected.[1] In short, he so thoroughly misled his Government that when he finally discovered, on the 29th, what the real situation was, he entirely lost his self-control and became hysterical, which Paléologue put down to his feeling of responsibility. *As regards France*—On the 16th Bethmann-Hollweg wrote to Count Roedern, Secretary of State for Alsace-Lorraine: "We have reason to believe that France, being at present very much preoccupied with other matters, will do all she can to dissuade Russia from attacking"[2]; and Schoen and Szécsen confirmed this information during the next few days. *As regards Italy*—In making marginal notes on a telegram from Lichnowsky, speaking of a "war *à quatre*", the Kaiser wrote: "he forgets Italy".[3] *As regards Belgium*—The Berlin Government thought, like Churchill and Kitchener, that if war broke out no resistance would be made to the German army marching through Belgium.[4]

Amidst so much optimistic news there was certainly the clear warning given by Lichnowsky, who had been doing his best to exert a restraining influence since the 13th of July; but Jagow replied imperturbably that "the more determination we show, the more likely Russia will be to keep quiet".[5]

First Step taken in Vienna.

These erroneous reports explain the German Government's attempt to maintain their line of diplomacy, and reconcile their concessions with their initial theory, when faced with the Russian protest immediately after the Austrian ultimatum. Austria and Germany had insisted from the first that the

[1] German Documents, No. 339. [2] Ibid., No. 58.

[3] Ibid., No. 157. Moltke and Hötzendorf were still counting on Italian help on the 31st of July. (See Moltke's *Memoirs* and the Austrian Red Book.)

[4] Supplement to the Austrian Red Book. We may add that, according to Hötzendorf's *Memoirs*, Tschirschky felt certain of Sweden's co-operation on the 26th, and Forgach believed, on the 27th, that Rumania would be loyal.

[5] German Documents, No. 72.

Austro-Serbian dispute was a purely private matter. In order to show clearly that there was no question of interfering with the European *status quo*, they agreed that a declaration of *désintéressement* should be made by the Austrian Ambassador in Petersburg on the 24th. When the German Government finally decided, on the 28th, to put pressure upon Austria, at England's urgent request, they confined themselves to asking her to renew this assurance, and back it up by fixing a limit to the military occupation.[1] They were not sufficiently uneasy, at that time, to be willing to forego the diplomatic success they had prepared and foreseen. They interposed, but were careful not to make more sacrifices than they could help. From the legal point of view, they were intervening in the Austro-Russian, not in the Austro-Serbian dispute, conformably with the principle they had laid down. From the political point of view, they did not want to lose the moral advantage of the crisis—closer alliance—and both by the form of their intervention and the substance of their demands they tried to avoid offending Austrian susceptibilities.

Prospects of Understanding.

But this attitude not only corresponded with Germany's estimate of the trend of opinion and of the military chances; it also argued a certain conception of the diplomatic possibilities. At that time Bethmann-Hollweg had every reason to believe that Austria's profession of désintéressement was sincere, and that Russia would be satisfied with it. Berchtold had answered his enquiries by telling Tschirschky that, in pursuance of a decision taken by the Ministerial Council on the 19th of July, no steps would be taken to add to the Dual Monarchy's Slav populations. In addition to that, the Chancellor was informed by his Ambassador in Petersburg, on the 26th, that Sazonov no longer protested against the mere fact of the ultimatum, as on the 21st; he no longer insisted, as on the 24th, that Austria's "political" demands must be purely and simply withdrawn, and the "juridical" claims conditionally upheld; he no longer

[1] German Documents, No. 323.

declared that it was for "Europe to consider and decide whether Serbia had complied with her obligations"; he no longer disputed the principle of the responsibility of Governments for the individual crimes committed by their countrymen; he continued to negotiate, in spite of his request for further delay having been refused; he admitted that Serbia ought to be given a "well-deserved lesson"; he confined himself to asking for "modification of some points" of the Austrian ultimatum,[1] and said to Szápáry, the same day, that possibly some modification in the form of the ultimatum might lead to agreement, that "it might perhaps be only a question of words".

On the 27th the relaxation of the tension was even more marked. Pourtalès reported the Russian Minister's fresh statements as follows: "Since declaring her territorial *désintéressement*, Austria has not taken any further hostile action against Serbia. In these circumstances, he is of opinion that the moment has come for an exchange of views between the Powers, as a means of 'building a golden bridge' for Austria."[2] On the 29th Bethmann-Hollweg received another telegram from Pourtalès, according to which the assurances of *désintéressement* and anxiety for peace proffered by Vienna and Berlin had "brought about an evident relaxation of the tension" in Petersburg. From these reports Bethmann-Hollweg still believed at that time, as he telegraphed to Tschirschky, that if Austria renewed her promise Russia would "have secured all she wanted".[3] And he also thought, when he advised direct negotiations between Austria and Russia, that he was in agreement with Sir Edward Grey, who had said it would be the best plan, and with Sazonov, who had put himself in communication with Vienna, acting on the advice of the German Ambassador.

Sudden Change.

But, as regards this, too, the Chancellor had been misled, or rather, the possibilities of a solution he thought he saw

[1] German Documents, No. 217. [2] Ibid., No. 282.

[3] Ibid., No. 380. San Giuliano similarly thought that Russia would only attack if Austria permanently occupied Serbian territory (German Documents, No. 249). This was also the opinion of Szápáry and Tschirschky (German Documents, No. 222).

vanished almost immediately. From the 29th onwards the situation was seriously aggravated by the Austrian declaration of war and the bombardment of Belgrade. After the commencement of hostilities the bases of Germany's mediation were no longer acceptable to anyone. Austria replied that day to Germany that further negotiations with Serbia had become absolutely impossible,[1] and notified this to Petersburg. On the other hand, Sazonov explained that he was "no longer in a position to treat directly with Austria, after the declaration of war",[2] and added, on the 30th, that he "could not be satisfied" with her assurances. He wanted independence for Serbia, as well as her integrity; "she must not become a Bokhara".[3] He asked for an immediate declaration to that effect from Austria and for "provisional suspension of the hostilities".[4]

Austrian *Désintéressement*.

For that matter, Austria's *désintéressement* had never been real. It was a simple manœuvre to avoid foreign interference until after a successful issue. As early as on the 5th of July, Hoyos, who had been given wide powers by the Vienna Government, discussed the necessity of dismembering Serbia with Zimmermann. It is true that this idea was disavowed later on by Berchtold and Tisza. It must be regarded as "a personal opinion", they wrote to Jagow, without making any further comment on the projects that had been formed. This "personal opinion", however, was that of a man who, according to Tschirschky, had "the greatest influence over Berchtold", and, in any case, it shows that there was an annexationist current of opinion at the Austro-Hungarian Ministry for Foreign Affairs. As early as on the 22nd, San Giuliano told Flotow that the Austrian announcement did not seem to him to be "a permanent undertaking",[5] and that "he was not altogether satisfied on that point". And, as a matter of fact, on the 27th Berchtold instructed his Ambassadors to

[1] German Documents, No. 356. [2] Ibid., No. 368.
[3] Ibid., No. 412. [4] Ibid., No. 368. [5] Ibid., No. 119.

say that Austria "did not propose to make any territorial conquest", but "without giving any definite pledge as to that",[1] and, on the 28th, in the instructions sent to Merey, he admitted that Austria might be "compelled", against her will, to proceed to permanent occupation of Serbian territory. Lichnowsky telegraphed the same day that, according to members of the Austrian Embassy staff in London, there was an idea in Vienna of dividing Serbia between the Balkan States. That was the truth. We know now that, at the Ministerial Council held in Vienna on the 19th, the future conditions of peace had been considered. Stürgkh had advocated deposing the Serbian dynasty, concluding a military agreement, and rectifying the frontiers; Berchtold, the cession of Serbian territory "to Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, and eventually Rumania", after which perhaps it would be "no longer possible" for Austria-Hungary not to annex too.[2] So Austria's absolute *désintéressement* was doubtful; in any case it did not guarantee Serbia's integrity, and her integrity itself would not have guaranteed her independence.

It was on receiving Lichnowsky's telegram that Bethmann-Hollweg first became aware of Austria-Hungary's secret intentions and exclaimed: "This duplicity is intolerable." The following day, the 29th, he telegraphed to Tschirschky that he regarded the attitude of the Austro-Hungarian Government with "increasing surprise", and concluded that they wanted to make sure of Germany's co-operation, and foresaw that it might be refused if they let her know exactly what they intended.[3]

Complicity and Misunderstanding.

In reality there had been a misunderstanding from the beginning between Austria and Germany as to the aim to pursue and the extent of Germany's approbation. A certain amount of hypocrisy in the unanimity between the two sovereigns had already been evident. William II.

[1] Supplement to Red Book, II., No. 75.
[2] Supplement to Red Book, I., No. 26.
[3] German Documents, No. 361.

advised Francis-Joseph, through the medium of Szögyény, "to take advantage of the present moment, which is so favourable", but only if "the necessity" for military action was "really recognized"[1]; and Bethmann-Hollweg said that the decision as to this principle did not concern Germany. "It is for us to judge what to do", Szögyény wrote, after hearing his opinion.[2] The instructions Tschirschky received in Vienna were similar. The Austro-Hungarian Government appealed to the common interest of the two Empires in order to justify their demand; the German Government replied by emphasizing their political independence and taking their stand on loyalty to the alliance. Bethmann-Hollweg advised "immediate action" but struck out the passage promising Austria Germany's co-operation "in all circumstances", from the despatch drafted by the German Foreign Office. And Zimmermann advised "acting with great caution", and not imposing humiliating conditions on Serbia.[3] Yet, a few days later, Francis-Joseph announced that he "now quite agreed with the German Government", and that a decision must be reached. It might be supposed that he had just been converted. The truth was that the agreement come to, at all events in appearance, between Vienna and Berlin, as early as on the 5th of July, had only been reached between Vienna and Budapest on the 14th, and through Tschirschky's intervention. The latter had told our Ambassador, Dumaïne, beforehand that he was "so convinced of the necessity for crushing the Serbs, that he would not hesitate to exceed the instructions of his Government, in order to determine Austria to act".[4]

And he did, in fact, carry on a policy of his own immediately after the murder. On the 3rd of July, he assured Berchtold that if the anti-Serb projects formed in Vienna had not hitherto met with Germany's approval, it was because no definite plan of action had ever been submitted to her, and that she would give her ally the fullest support directly the latter ceased merely making "suggestions".[5]

[1] Supplement to Red Book, I., No. 6.
[2] Ibid., No. 7.
[3] Ibid., No. 5
[4] Dumaine, loc. cit.
[5] Supplement to Red Book, No. 10.

He encouraged the idea of military action against Serbia on his own initiative, on the one condition that the terms of peace should be outlined beforehand and a favourable diplomatic situation created. And yet, the next day, he told the Wilhelmstrasse that he had advised " moderation " in Vienna. . . . On the 8th of July he went farther still : in transmitting the instructions of his Government in favour of Austria's taking immediate action, he added a discreet threat that the alliance might be broken off, as a means of enforcing his advice. From his interview with him, Berchtold concluded that " Germany would interpret negotiations on our part with Serbia as a confession of weakness, which could not fail to react on our position in the Triple Alliance and on Germany's future policy " (letter to Tisza).[1]

It was after noting the statements made by the German Ambassador that Tisza, who had at first advocated simple diplomatic action, in so far came round to Berchtold's opinion as to fall in with the idea of a draconian ultimatum at the Ministerial Council on the 19th of July, and we know from him how very much they influenced his views. As early as on the 7th of July Count Stürgkh, the Austrian Prime Minister, remarked to his colleagues that " the situation had assumed another aspect, and that a psychological situation had arisen which compelled them to fight Serbia at all costs ". " If we allow this opportunity to pass ", he explained, " we shall no longer be sure of being able to renew the alliance with Berlin." [2] And on the 9th Francis-Joseph told Hötzendorf that they must act, " if only on account of Germany ".[3]

In short, Germany's consent, emphasized, if not twisted into something different, by Tschirschky's advice and threats, galvanized a still hesitating Austria into action. They had so long been used to Germany's disapproval that the timid Viennese politicians were inclined to think they could suggest plans of action without fear of being taken at their word. If Hoyos is to be believed, the mission he undertook was " as a feeler ", and it certainly seemed that the approval

[1] Supplement to Red Book, No. 3. [2] Ibid., No. 8.
[3] Hötzendorf, *Aus meiner Dienstzeit*, Vol. IV.

secured was more than had been hoped for.[1] For Austria the die was now cast. Although she may not have intended to be taken at her word, she now acted upon it. But the agreement with Germany, which had been the driving force, was based on a misunderstanding. *The Berlin Government thought they had made reservations which would warrant their taking matters into their own hands in case of European complications, whilst, through a familiar psychological illusion, the Vienna Government thought the suggestion they had made to their ally had been made by the latter to them; they considered Germany responsible for their decision and committed in advance to all their actions. The one Government contemplated a limited military operation, without annexation, and only in case of the ultimatum being rejected by Serbia; the other wanted to profit by the co-operation they thought was assured, to settle their quarrel, regardless of the Serbian attitude or the European repercussions, and win the most complete victory possible. In short, the two allies had confided in one another in the dark.*[2]

Between the 27th and the 29th of July, the veil was lifted.

The Veil Lifted.

On the 28th—as previously stated—Germany had already decided to interpose in Vienna. England was putting greater pressure on her to do so, whilst on the other hand the Serbian reply, which was not what Berlin had expected, opened the door to an immediate understanding with her, and caused Germany to adopt a fresh attitude with regard to the Vienna Government. On the 29th and 30th, Bethmann-Hollweg resumed his mediation on the same

[1] Schoen, the Bavarian chargé d'affaires in Berlin, wrote on the 18th of July: "It is almost unpalatable to the authorities in Vienna, who are always timid and irresolute, that the Germans do not advise caution and moderation" (Bavarian Documents).

[2] It may be added that although the German Government may have been informed of the broad lines of the ultimatum by Tschirschky, they did not receive the text till some hours after it had been presented. Jagow then remarked to Bethmann that it was much "too harsh", and to the British ambassador that it "left a good deal to be desired". Similarly, the Serbian reply (which only refused to agree to the Austrian police taking part in the investigations) first reached them through the medium of Serbia, not of Austria, and after considerable delay. Wiesner's report was never passed on to them at all.

bases, but in a different atmosphere, and with far more energy. This time he was under the influence of news received from Petersburg stating that Sazonov had resumed his intransigent attitude, of an interview with Goschen, which had opened his eyes for the first time to the terrible possibility that England might declare war, of despatches informing him that Italy and Rumania would probably remain neutral, and, finally, of the discovery of Austria's duplicity. His many illusions were dispelled at a stroke. "On my return", the Kaiser wrote, "the Chancellor admitted that all his political calculations had been mistaken." [1] He said himself, "I thought Russia would hesitate to take the crowning step, except in case of absolute necessity, and that, given the choice between her friendships and the peace of the world, England would choose the latter." [2]

German Pressure on Austria.

In the course of a conversation with Sazonov, on the morning of the 30th of July, Pourtalès said that the *danger of a European conflagration threw the Austro-Serbian question into the background*, and the Kaiser, when reading the despatch, made a marginal note, approving of the statement. The time had gone by when William II. talked of "immediate action", and of "retaking the Sandjak", [3] or, Lichnowsky having suggested pressure being put on Vienna, scribbled (on the 23rd): "Why should I do any such thing?" [4] He now exclaimed: "We have the folly and ineptitude of our ally to thank for our having fallen into this trap." [5] On the 29th he sent a telegram to the Tsar (which he had refused to do the evening before, when the Chancellor suggested it) and offered to mediate personally. Bethmann-Hollweg telegraphed at the same time to Vienna that, in the opinion of the German Government, "the fact that Serbia had given in formed a suitable basis for negotiations" [6] and instructed Tschirschky to lose no time in conveying this to the Ballplatz. On the 30th, at three o'clock in

[1] *My Memoirs.*
[2] *Betrachtungen zum Weltkrieg.* English translation, *Reflections on the World War* (Thornton Butterworth).
[3] German Documents, No. 155.
[4] Ibid., No. 121.
[5] Ibid., No. 401.
[6] Ibid., No. 384.

the morning, he informed him of the news received from London, explained the gravity of the position, transmitted Grey's proposal of mediation, and added: "Having regard to these circumstances, we must strongly urge the Vienna Cabinet to accept mediation on the favourable conditions suggested. The responsibility for the consequences that might otherwise ensue would be very heavy for us." [1]

A little later he transmitted Sazonov's grievances, and complained that Austria was disregarding Germany's suggestions, adding: "We are prepared to fulfil the obligations of our alliance, but we must refuse to allow Vienna to draw us wantonly, and without regard to our advice, into a world-wide conflagration." [2] At nine o'clock in the evening [3] he sent another telegram to the same effect: "We can but strongly urge Austria's accepting Grey's proposal", he said, and he added that, if she refused, the Berlin Government would be placed in "an absolutely untenable position".[4] It is true that the instructions given to Tschirschky in this telegram were cancelled two hours later, but only to be followed on the 31st, at three o'clock in the morning, by the transmission of a telegram from King George to Prince Henry of Prussia, showing that England and Germany were agreed as to the best means of solving the difficulty.

Szögyény's Telegram.

The telegram sent to Vienna from Berlin, by Szögyény, on the 27th of July, has been turned to great account by allied propaganda, to disprove the sincerity of this evolution. In it he said that the German Government would shortly have to transmit fresh English proposals, but "did not associate themselves in any way with these proposals, and were even definitely against their being considered". [5] The American experts tell us that this passage was what the Versailles judges relied upon chiefly in condemning

[1] German Documents, No. 395. [2] Ibid., No. 396.
[3] Two hours earlier, the Kaiser had seconded his Chancellor in a telegram to Francis-Joseph, recommending acceptance of the English proposal.
[4] German Documents, No. 441.
[5] Supplement to Austrian Red Book, II., No. 68.

Germany. We shall not urge the objections that have been made to it on the ground of the Ambassador's enfeebled mental capacity, or Bethmann-Hollweg and Jagow's formal denials. We will only remark that the statements made by the latter, to which Szögyény alludes, were prior to the communications received on the 28th and 29th, which determined the course of Germany's policy; that they were made at a time when the Berlin Government still believed in the great probability of the conflict being localized, and expected that it would be through concessions on the part of Russia which would save the necessity for action on their part; that the British Government were then recommending that the Powers should mediate, in order to prevent the Austro-Serbian conflict, not, as three days later, suggesting a "declaration" from Austria, after a success; that Jagow was anticipating the time when fresh proposals would be transmitted to Vienna without comment, that what he said might be interpreted as a silent indication of his wishes, but could not out-weigh the urgent and explicit advice given to Austria subsequently, under very different circumstances, and so strongly and clearly expressed as to leave no room to doubt its genuineness; that Szögyény himself, in a telegram of the 30th, to Vienna, testified to Germany's altered frame of mind: "Whereas till quite recently there still appeared to be no uneasiness at all in Government circles with regard to the possibility of a European conflict, I must confess to now having a feeling that within the last few days there has been a good deal of anxiety, which there is no reason to attribute merely to the greater reality of the question"[1]; finally, that Berchtold and Hoyos, who, after the war, so promptly threw all the responsibility on to Germany, have never appealed to this passage to justify their attitude, and that, on the other hand, we know from Hötzendorf what they really thought. He tells us that the impression made on Berchtold, during the night of the 30th of July, by the Chancellor's entreaties, was that "Germany was beating a retreat". *This is sufficient*

[1] Supplement to the Red Book, III., No. 32. Szögyény said at the same time that Jagow advised Austria to accept the English proposal (Supplement to the Red Book, No. 31).

to show that the Ambassador's telegram did not refer to the endeavours to mediate on the 29th and 30th of July, and that, if it faithfully describes the German Government's feeling on the 27th, it merely helps us to measure the extent and rapidity of the change.

Austria's Tactics.

Faced with these dramatic reproaches, the Austrian Government avoided running directly counter to their ally. On the 29th they took advantage of the declaration of war to decline her suggestions ; on the 30th, they delayed their answer to fresh appeals from Berlin, on the ground of Tisza's absence, which prevented their coming to any decision, but they resumed diplomatic conversations with Russia ; on the 31st, confident that war was inevitable, they feigned acceptance of a principle.[1] In addition to this, Tschirschky continued his tactics during those critical days, and they contributed to obscure the situation. He carried out the instructions of his Government, but, on the 31st, Berchtold assures us, he approved of Austria's unsatisfactory answer.[2]

Beneath all this subtlety and duplicity the real intentions of the Austrian Government were deliberately bellicose. On the 30th Berchtold did not authorize Szápáry to do more than open " a general academic discussion " with Sazonov.[3] The Ambassador thought this so useless that at first he did not attempt it, and only entered into conversations afterwards " in order to put Russia as far as possible in the wrong ".[4] When the German Ambassador put fresh English proposals before him, the Austrian Minister immediately rejected the idea of suspending the military operations. He was willing to be satisfied with temporary occupation confined to a limited area, but only *after* the conclusion of peace.

The next day (the 31st), the Ministers present at a Cabinet

[1] The Kaiser seems to have been taken in ; he thought that the Austrian reply and the resumption of negotiations in Petersburg were evidence of genuine adhesion to his point of view, he nevertheless felt it necessary to make quite sure of it. (See his marginal notes.)

[2] Letter from Berchtold, September 28, 1919.

[3] Supplement to Austrian Red Book, III., No. 44. [4] Ibid., No. 76.

Council unanimously sanctioned his decision, and tried to find a means of rejecting the plan of a Conference, which was equally unacceptable to them, by making impossible conditions. Berchtold said plainly that "if the action were to end now in merely bringing them prestige, it would have been absolutely useless in his opinion. They would gain nothing by merely occupying Serbia . . ."; and Stürgkh declared that to him the idea of a Conference was "odious". Francis-Joseph telegraphed the same day to William II.: "The action in which my army is engaged against Serbia cannot be interrupted by Russia's menacing and defiant attitude. A fresh rescue of Serbia, through Russia's intervention, would have the most serious consequences for my countries, therefore I cannot possibly allow such intervention. I am fully aware of the importance of my decisions." *In reality, the Austrian Government, weary of Serbia's promises, which were never kept, desired above all, and as an object in itself, a military victory, which would enable them to re-establish their authority and compel their enemy to disarm.*[1] *If they could have secured an initial success before the Powers intervened, they would no doubt have agreed to a compromise, but, on the 30th of July, the army was so full of hope that they could not make any concessions.*

What would Germany's attitude have been if Austria had directly refused to do so? Would she have reminded her of the defensive nature of the alliance, as on the 30th, or have given a more liberal promise of armed loyalty, as on the 5th? We shall have to return to this question; we think it can be answered nearly enough, but only by entering, however little, into the realm of psychological estimates and hypotheses, and, as we are now only trying to clear the ground, we will keep to facts in this chapter. *Now, to show how events succeeded one another, it is only necessary to say that at the time when Bethmann-Hollweg was making his final effort, the order for general mobilization had already been signed some hours earlier in Petersburg.*

[1] As regards this, see Hötzendorf's conversation with Francis-Joseph on the 8th of July (*Aus meiner Dienstzeit*, Vol. IV).

The Russian Mobilization.

It has been maintained that this Russian decision did not justify the harsh ultimatum from Germany which followed it, and we are reminded that it was accompanied by pacific assurances from Sazonov; but it must be admitted that here we come to one of the weakest points of the Allied thesis. Assuming for a moment that this thesis is perfectly correct, and that the Russian mobilization was not equivalent to a declaration of war in everyone's eyes; that does not alter the fact that in decreeing it, Russia got the start of Germany. Now, as we shall see, rapidity was considered by the German General Staff the only chance of victory for a country driven into a war on two fronts. Germany was therefore bound to reply to the Russian mobilization by counter-mobilization, and to declare war at the same time, if she acted loyally, as her military organization provided for the troops, when concentrated, being conveyed beyond German territory with great rapidity. To have risked the chances of an impending war by inaction would have required either real moral heroism or remarkable optimism. Now nothing suggests that we should credit the ruling powers in Germany in 1914 with this extreme love of peace, and the behaviour of the Russian Government did not allow of their even continuing to hope for it. But the hypothesis we have propounded is unnecessary: *there can be no possible doubt as to the character of general mobilization in Russia, which has been defined over and over again.* In the course of the military negotiations in 1892, General Boisdeffre said to the Tsar: "Mobilization is war", and the Chief of the General Staff, Obrutchev, stated that Russian mobilization ought to be followed by "immediate action, acts of war", in a word, ought to be inseparable from an "offensive".[1] Telegraphing to the Kaiser on the 29th of July, the Tsar said: "I foresee that very soon I shall

[1] Yellow Book, *L'Alliance Franco-Russe*, No. 42. Boisdeffre also said, in a Note to Obrutchev: "To order general mobilization . . . would mean acting as the aggressors in Europe, and being placed in a difficult position towards neutral countries; whereas, by waiting for Germany to mobilize, at the same time taking the necessary precautionary measures, the latter would be assuming the rôle of aggressor."

be overwhelmed by the pressure brought upon me, and be forced to take extreme measures which will lead to war." [1] When signing the order for mobilization, on the 30th, he said to Sazonov: "Remember that it is a question of sending thousands upon thousands to their death." [2]

Amongst evidence given by higher Russian officers, General Dobrorolsky, who had to carry out the order, writes in his military style that he was "called upon, from the technical point of view, to set light to the world's funeral pyre", that "all that was required of the supreme authority was to choose the right moment", and that when that decision was taken, it was impossible to go back on it.[3] *Amongst the reports sent by foreign diplomats*, we find that on the 25th Sir George Buchanan said that if Russia mobilized, Germany would not be satisfied with counter-mobilization, "but would probably declare war at once"; [4] "the inevitable result would be a European war", he wrote on the 30th of July, the day the Ukase was signed. *Amongst opinions expressed by heads of Governments*, Sir Edward Grey said that suspension of the Russian mobilization was "the only chance of preserving peace" [5]; whilst, amongst the warnings given by Germany, Pourtalès was instructed, on the 29th, to state that "any further steps taken by Russia to mobilize would compel Germany to order mobilization, and that it would then hardly be possible to avert a European war".[6]

Now the order for Russian general mobilization was given at 4 p.m. on the 30th of July,[7] twenty hours before the order for Austrian general mobilization,[8] and the German proclamation of a state of "danger of war", and forty-eight hours before the German and French mobilizations.[9] *There was clearly no question of Russia having acted under compulsion. The many different pretexts advanced to justify her*

[1] German Documents, No. 332.
[2] Paléologue, *La Russie des Tsars*. English translation, *An Ambassador's Memoirs* (Hutchinson & Co.).
[3] Dobrorolsky, *La Mobilisation Russe en* 1914.
[4] Blue Book, No. 17. [5] Ibid., No. 103.
[6] German Documents, No. 342.
[7] Historians are now unanimous as to the question of hours, and their opinion is based on the evidence of Paléologue, de Bunsen, Dobrorolsky, Daniloff, etc.
[8] At midday on the 31st of July. [9] August 1st, at 4 p.m.

decision are the best proof of this: disquieting information received in Russia as to the German preparations (Paléologue and Dobrorolsky), Germany's refusal of a Conference and Austria's intransigence (Poincaré), the German ultimatum to Russia (Sazonov), Austro-Hungarian general mobilization (Viviani). In reality, nothing but a serious military menace could have made it an act of legitimate defence. Certain authors have tried to represent the Austrian preparations in Galicia as a menace of this nature, but Sazonov makes no allusion to them in the telegram to Isvolsky in which he announced the Russian decision, and we know from another source, the Austrian Documents, that no important military measures were taken in that part of Austria before the 30th of July.

This leads us to regard the Russian mobilization as having been from that moment a central point, a decisive event, which governed the whole history of the last few days of peace. *On the one hand, the Russian Ukase, sufficient in itself to determine the outbreak of war, deprived subsequent decisions of all power to affect the issue, and consequently of all interest for history: also, just as we have been led to attach no decisive value to arguments deduced from Germany's attitude at a time when she was not faced with the real problem, we must equally set aside those based on her acts at a period when it was already decided. On the other hand, during the very days when negotiation was possible with a Germany at last alive to the danger, but still a free agent, we shall see the preparation and development of the Russian mobilization throwing a doubt on the sincerity of the proposals made jointly by the Allies.*

The Declarations of War.

To show how little the events subsequent to the 31st of July had to do with the problem of responsibility, it need only be said that *both in France and Germany the expediency of declaring war was discussed as a secondary question, one of pure form, whose solution would not make any difference to the inevitable course of military events.* In Berlin, Falkenhayn considered that it would be an advantage to leave

the initiative to the adversary, but Bethmann-Hollweg, who was more punctilious, thought, on the contrary, that it would be more correct to make a formal declaration before opening hostilities, and he carried the day.[1] In Paris, according to a telegram from Isvolsky dated the 1st of August, 1914, Poincaré intended to summon a meeting of Parliament when the mobilization orders had been carried out, in order to obtain the necessary authority to declare war, but lived in hope of Germany's taking the initiative, and of this facilitating British co-operation, and saving the necessity for " a public debate on the application of the treaty of alliance ", which he would " prefer to avoid ".[2] On the 2nd of August another telegram from the Russian Ambassador announced that the frontier violations by " small isolated detachments " would enable the Government to open hostilities " without a formal declaration of war ", and to announce it on the 4th of August to the Chamber.[3] *War was therefore certain on that date, apart from any German initiative. But what is more, the German aggressor was not at all anxious to invade us.* Moltke relates in his memoirs how he was summoned to the palace on the 2nd of August, and found the Kaiser and Bethmann-Hollweg in great spirits, having received a proposal from England, from which it appeared that she would guarantee the neutrality of France in the conflict.[4] The monarch exclaimed : " We will march east with the whole army ", telegraphed to stop the invasion of Luxembourg, and upset the whole German concentration, regardless of Moltke's remonstrances and despair. The latter vainly suggested that the intended demand for the surrender of Toul and Verdun should nevertheless be made ; the Kaiser rejected this proposal, on the ground that it would look like distrust of England.

Last Subterfuges.

Therefore we shall not reckon as signs of peace either the Tsar's proposal to continue mobilizing without opening hostilities, which seems like an irony ; or the Russian

[1] Bethmann-Hollweg, *Betrachtungen zum Weltkriege* ; Moltke, *Erinnerungen.* [2] *Livre Noir.* [3] Ibid.
[4] A mistake made by Lichnowsky.

Government's approval of the British suggestion that the military preparations should be simultaneously suspended, which they could not carry out ; or Sazonov's last formula, or the renewal of conversations by Austria, or the Kaiser's last telegram to the Tsar. *These were merely manœuvres—ruses de guerre—on both sides : the adversary was made to refuse illusory proposals, in order to exhibit him in a bad light, whilst the whole thing was already decided.* As to the withdrawal to a distance of ten kilometres, of which the French Government boasted so much, it was nothing but a propagandist manœuvre,[1] an illusory sacrifice : from the first, the order was left " to be interpreted " by the military command ; (" if a strategic point was of importance, the distance withdrawn was to be less ", Viviani explained to the Briey Committee of Inquiry) ; at some points (Viviani quoted the instance of the 42nd Division) it involved the troops being pushed forward, not withdrawn ; finally, from the 2nd of August onwards, it was not observed at all, which enabled the German Government to appeal to frontier violations in their declaration of war. Neither do we consider the last steps taken by Germany a proof that she wished for war : the ultimatums to Russia and Belgium, the demand made of France, and the declaration of war. They were simply military decisions, taken at a time when concern for the public welfare was responsible for the power having passed into the hands of the military authorities, and must not be associated with the civil Government's foreign policy, which they even directly contravened (notably by their repercussions on England's neutrality).

Having thus cleared the ground at the cost of a few liberties taken with chronological order, we will now come back to the earlier period we think essential, and turn our attention to the Triple Entente.

Pacific Steps Taken by Russia.

We can eliminate France from this part of our exposition, as she gave Russia an unconditional promise of loyalty

[1] " With a view to securing the co-operation of our English neighbours ". (Messimy to Joffre, August 1st.)

as early as on the 24th, and confirmed it on the 29th when the situation was worse, thus pledging herself in advance to support any action initiated by Russia, whether bellicose or pacific. Or rather, we must first consider the policy pursued by the Russian Government, before we can pass judgment, indirectly, on France's attitude. Three moves may be put to their credit: the concessions made by Sazonov in his conversations with the Austrian and German Ambassadors on the 26th and 27th of July, accompanied by overtures with a view to Austro-Russian *pourparlers*; the Tsar's appeal to German mediation (29th to 30th of July); and the proposal to refer the dispute to the Hague tribunal (29th July).

Before examining these three steps, we must make a preliminary reservation, which already applies to the first and *a fortiori* to the remaining two. Since the 25th of July, Russia, whilst pouring forth assurances to the contrary, had been making military preparations directed not only against Austria, but also against Germany, as the following telegram from Paléologue proves: "Yesterday (the 25th of July) the War Minister told me that the Army Corps of the military districts of Kiev, Odessa, Kazan, and Moscow, were being mobilized. Secret instructions are, however also being sent to the *Vilna*, *Warsaw*, and *Petersburg* districts. Martial law is being proclaimed in the towns and Governments of Petersburg and Moscow." [1] At the same time, the mobilization of the thirteen Army Corps, which was to be carried out on the 29th, had already been decided upon in principle. Sazonov announced it to Paléologue on the 25th of July, and in reply to Buchanan, who asked him if Russia would go to war, said that "the mobilization would at any rate have to be carried out." [2] The Tsar corroborated this when he telegraphed to the Kaiser on the 30th: "The military measures which have now come into force were decided upon five days ago." [3] According to Dobrorolsky, "war was a certainty" even at that early

[1] Paléologue to Bienvenu-Martin, unpublished document quoted from the archives by Bourgeois, *Origines et Responsabilités de la Grande Guerre.*
[2] Paléologue, *La Russie des Tsars.* Blue Book, No. 6.
[3] German Documents, No. 390.

date (the 25th) and " the many telegrams exchanged between Germany and Russia were only the *mise en scène* of an historical drama ".[1] *If this were to be admitted, Russia's pacific proposals would have no further value for the historian.*

But hypotheses that are too simple should always be distrusted. Let us therefore suppose that Russia was sincere. It is none the less true that the concessions made by Sazonov were only made for a short time, and merely served to mislead Germany : withdrawn directly Austria declared war, they ceased to be a basis of negotiation at the very moment when the Berlin Government appeared disposed to be satisfied with them ; the Tsar's appeal to the Kaiser was rendered null and void by general mobilization when the mediation requested had been started in Vienna, and before it had met with any response ; the proposal of arbitration was made by the Tsar without the knowledge of his Ministers, and when Sazonov had declined to transmit it two days earlier, under far more favourable circumstances[2] ; finally, peace procedure of this kind could not be considered by Germany unless preceded by suspension of the Russian mobilization, which the Tsar had refused in a telegram to the Kaiser.

British Mediation.

But apart from these direct negotiations, the Russian Government supported England's proposals of mediation. It is these proposals that we must now consider, attaching special importance to them, because they were made, at least theoretically, in the name of the Triple Entente.

Grey made four successive efforts : on the 24th of July he proposed, at the same time as a prolongation of the delay in presenting the ultimatum, mediation by the four Powers not directly interested : Germany, Italy, England, and France ; on the 26th he defined his proposal, giving it the form of a Conference of Ambassadors, to take place in London ; on the 27th he asked Germany to intervene to induce her ally to accept the Serbian reply, at any rate

[1] Dobrorolsky, loc. cit.
[2] Recouly, *Les Heures tragiques d'avant-guerre.*

as a basis of negotiation; on the 29th he returned to his two previous proposals: mediation *à quatre* or German mediation in Vienna, leaving the choice to the Berlin Government, even allowing them to devise other methods of adjustment, and agreeing, this time, to "the occupation of Belgrade or other towns" which he had considered inadmissible in his previous statements.

The first proposal was accepted, in principle, by Germany. The second would equally have been accepted if the Berlin Government had really wished to compromise then, for they knew that similar Conferences had more than once settled ticklish questions, and that a refusal might precipitate the crisis. It must be said, however, that to have accepted would have involved a considerable sacrifice on their part. *There was a great difference between dual intervention and a Conference.* The object of the first would have been to instil moderation into the two great rival Powers, whilst the second would have been held with a view to adjusting the Austro-Serbian dispute. The one was associated with the theory of localization, the other with that of "Europeanization". There was just the same difference between them as between the two adverse points of view. It should also be noted that the change in England's attitude was due to French advice, and in the interest of Russia. It was Paul Cambon who pointed out to Grey that they ought not merely to interpose between Petersburg and Vienna, they ought first to mediate between Vienna and Belgrade.[1] And when Grey, yielding to his advice, formulated his project of a Conference, accompanying it by a project of suspending the military preparations, directed against Austria, it was Viviani who exclaimed: "He grasps the logic of the situation."[2] What would the practical consequences of the British plan have been? It consisted apparently in taking two Powers from each group, and, diplomatic equality being assured, trying to find the most just solution; but on one side there were two Powers closely allied, on the other Germany would have had a nominal ally, who was bound to the opposite camp by secret agreements, was a rival of Austria in the Balkans,

[1] Yellow Book, No. 32. [2] Ibid., No. 76.

and had sided against the point of view of the Central Empires from the beginning of the crisis; *consequently Grey's procedure would have led to Austria being condemned by three votes to one.* And would not even Lichnowsky, who was to represent Germany, have availed himself of this opportunity of showing his Austrophobia? Berchtold expressed a fear of this on the 30th of July. In explaining these consequences of a "Conference *à quatre*", we are showing that in supporting the English proposal, the Triple Entente Powers were not making any real sacrifice in the cause of peace. The success of such mediation would have been a diplomatic victory of the most flattering kind for them.

Moreover, the Austro-Serbian conflict was, by its very nature, one which did not lend itself to the judgment of an Areopagus. By what criterion would the arbiters have estimated the responsibility of the Serbian Government? What would they have suggested as a pacific means of putting a stop to the Serbian propaganda? It was not a question of a legal dispute, but rather of a struggle for prestige between two States whose differences had become irreconcilable, each being determined to maintain or secure its unity, as the case might be, at the expense of the other, and there were many ancient quarrels, and reciprocal acts of treachery, to be adjusted at the same time as the Sarajevo dispute. It would have been very difficult to find a *logical* solution for this vital conflict. And then, above all, the arbiters chosen were, in spite of appearances, too much interested in the dispute, for they connected it with the question of balance of power in Europe. Pourtalès said with justice to Sazonov, on the 25th of July: "It ought to have been foreseen that the general political point of view of the different groups of Powers would have a decisive influence on their attitude towards the question; what would the practical object of such a procedure be, if Austria-Hungary's political friends ranged themselves on her side, and her adversaries on the other? With whom would the decision rest in that case?"[1] After all, it was no longer a question, as the year before, of disputes relating to a question previously "Europeanized" on Austria's

[1] German Documents, No. 204.

own initiative, but of a private quarrel between two Governments. *Sir Edward Grey no doubt recognized the justice of these remarks, as he said, two days later, that the direct discussion advocated by Germany would be the best possible solution.*[1]

The third English proposal was not directly opposed to the Berlin view, like the one which preceded it. Germany had already admitted the possibility that she might mediate in Vienna, and the idea suggested—of making the Serbian reply a basis of discussion—had occurred to the Kaiser spontaneously; nor did the proposal aim at humiliating Austria by summoning her before a tribunal; the idea was rather to induce her to make the necessary concessions voluntarily. The only fault to be found with it was that it included a demand for the immediate cessation of hostilities. However harsh the action of the Austrian Government may have been, it must be remembered that they had to reckon with highly inflamed public opinion in their own country, and an army thirsting for glory, and that it would have been difficult for them to have suddenly arrested the machinery they had set in motion with such a flourish of trumpets. It would have been wiser to have acquiesced in the idea of a military demonstration at that time, on the understanding that the consequences should be limited. No policy can be said to be absolutely pacific which restricts negotiations to what can be conceded without inconvenience by one party, without considering what concessions are possible on the other side; it provides the Government responsible for it with a weapon of defence against attacks in Parliament and by the Press, but does not enable them to achieve the end they profess to have in view, namely the maintenance of peace. Be that as it may, London and Berlin no longer differed except on this point, and the result of Grey's conversation with Lichnowsky was that Tschirschky took a first step in Vienna.

The fourth proposal made by the British Government was at last in entire accord with the views of the German Govern-

[1] Blue Book, No. 84. Grey wrote the same day to Goschen that if Austria agreed to compromise, "we shall all join in deep gratitude to the Chancellor for having saved the peace of Europe". No. 77.

ment. That the Austrian offensive should only be undertaken in order to secure guarantees was the very opinion the Emperor William had expressed on the 28th,[1] *and which Bethmann-Hollweg had transmitted to Vienna. Only it does not seem that Russia was ever inclined genuinely to adopt the English standpoint.* Sazonov's statements on the 29th, the day on which Grey sent his telegram, show plainly that the two allies were not of one mind at that time. The Russian Minister insisted on a provisional suspension of hostilities; the British Minister agreed that the Austrian army should first occupy Serbian territory. The one continued to demand, as a prior condition, the "Europeanization" of the conflict, the other confined himself for the moment to asking that, after securing some military satisfaction, Austria should state her intentions.[2] At the same time, Sazonov informed Buchanan that Russia "would not be satisfied with any engagement which Austria might take",[3] and that the order for Russian mobilization would be given the moment the Austrian army crossed the frontier, which was directly contrary to the English proposal. A few hours later, after the warning given by Pourtalès with regard to Russian mobilization, the Minister withdrew his promise of the day before, to agree to any proposal that might be made by England,[4] and, pressed by the German Ambassador, merely proposed to him the substitution of a formula so little conciliatory that Poincaré said, directly he heard of it, that he thought the conditions would not be accepted by Austria.[5]

England and the Russian Mobilization.

Moreover, the British proposal could not insure the maintenance of peace unless it led either to an evolution in Austria or a rupture between Germany and Austria; and this end could not be achieved if Russia's continued preparations for mobilization were to arrest the German activities in Vienna, and cause the two allies to

[1] German Documents, No. 293.
[2] Ibid., No. 368.
[3] Blue Book, No. 72.
[4] Orange Book, No. 64.
[5] Blue Book, No. 99. In the course of the same day, Sazonov agreed to the proclamation of general mobilization.

turn their attention to military matters rather than to diplomacy, thus renewing their solidarity. In other words, England's efforts were doomed to be abortive unless she put equal pressure on both sides, on Berlin to mediate, and on Russia to suspend her military preparations. And, as a matter of fact, Grey begged Russia, on the 25th and 26th, not to "precipitate war by mobilizing",[1] but his request was not reinforced by any threat of sanctions, or any allusion to his future attitude, which accordingly did not depend upon it; moreover, it was transmitted by a convinced advocate of intervention, and weakened by his statement to Lichnowsky, before the 24th of July, which was repeated to Paul Cambon,[2] that "in view of the character of the Austrian Note, he felt quite helpless as far as Russia was concerned",[3] as well as by the assurances previously given by the French Government, who had always told the Russian Government that England could be counted upon in case of a general war. Consequently, contrary to Grey's wishes, Russia was looking to England with more confidence than anxiety.

On the 29th of July, the following Reuter telegram was sent out all over the world from Petersburg: "The Russian public are prepared to go to war, feeling confident of British support, as to which hardly any further doubt is felt." And the next day, in spite of Buchanan's diplomatic advice, general mobilization was decreed. *To succeed in his work of mediation, it would have been necessary for Grey to put peace before alliances, and have the courage to say that he would side against the first offender, that if it were Russia, he would refuse his co-operation, and if it were Germany, he would refuse his neutrality. But it was only on the 31st of July that he decided to throw the weight of the Triple Entente into the scales.* On that day, he told the German Ambassador that if his Government made a reasonable proposal, clearly showing a desire for peace, and if Russia and France rejected it, the British Government "would have nothing more to do with the consequences, but, otherwise, England would be drawn in if France became involved in the conflict".[4]

[1] Blue Book, No. 44.
[2] And consequently to Russia.
[3] Blue Book, No. 11.
[4] Ibid., No. 111.

At the same time, he suggested to Mensdorff that Austria should make a proposal to Russia which would put the latter in the wrong if she did not accept it,[1] thus endeavouring to lay a trap for the Petersburg Government, so that it might be easier for him to shake off the obligations of alliance, in case of need. But it was too late: the irrevocable step had already been taken; it had relieved Germany's conscience, and given Austria the excuse she was looking for to justify her refusal of mediation. During the whole period when matters were still in suspense, Grey's advice to the Russian Government was never given with sufficient force to insure its being attended to, and his concessions to Germany were not made quickly enough to detach her from Austria in time.

First Conclusions.

This hasty examination of the documents certainly does not enable us to express an opinion, or to apportion the responsibility as yet. Nevertheless, we are forced to certain conclusions.

We are already in a position to point out the mistake that has most commonly been made in studying the problem. *It has been, on both sides, the mistake of basing the arguments on diplomatic despatches to which a positive value was attached, without taking the secret decisions of the Governments into account. This can only lead to the discovery of signs of peace everywhere after war had been decided upon, for the main object of the diplomats was to create this illusion. If we work on more sensible lines, we shall see that there was nothing at all in most of these eleventh hour controversies.* This in itself prompts us to extend the scope of our inquiry to the essential problem, the question of how the war originated. We shall not be able to solve this problem by merely considering the events of July 1914. *It will be necessary to go back to pre-war history for an explanation of the conflict between the two theories, "localization" and "Europeanization", ands how how, just when the conflict*

[1] Grey told Mensdorff on the 7th of August, that in that case, he intended to stand by Germany. (Supplement to the Austrian Red Book.)

was approaching a rational solution, this was rendered impossible by the inter-play of mobilizations and alliances, which had been arranged long beforehand.

Nevertheless, we are now entitled to reject the German theory, even as formulated with relative moderation in 1923 by Montgelas, in his "seventeen conclusions".[1] At any rate, we can neither admit the first, which expresses implicit belief in the sincerity of Austria's *désintéressement*, nor the sixth, in which Germany's miscalculation as to France and Russia's readiness for war is raised to the dignity of a moral excuse, nor the ninth, where the author says that an Austro-Russian understanding had almost been reached, when the Russian general mobilization supervened. We must also refuse to be guided by the Allied Socialists who have adopted these errors. *But we must equally reject the theory propounded by the Versailles judges: it could only be established by fully believing that a decision to go to war was taken at the beginning of the crisis, all the succeeding events having only been in pursuance of this decision; by assuming that Germany was acting with her eyes open; disregarding the mistaken hypotheses and hopes of peace which largely account for her attitude; considering Austria and Germany as entirely of one mind, in spite of the sharp disagreement between them; misstating the history of the mobilizations; representing the divergence between the projects of mediation too simply as a contest between bellicose and pacific tendencies; letting it be supposed that Germany had persisted in her refusal to mediate, and ignoring the understanding reached between London and Berlin.*

In reality so weak a case could not have been upheld had it not been based on a belief held long before the war, a particular view, already existing, of Germany's policy, which warranted a summary and ruthless interpretation of her actions, where sure proofs were lacking. In the same way, the last steps taken by the Entente were regarded in Berlin as the crowning stroke of the policy of encirclement. To explain these national points of view, as well as to understand the real origin of the events that took place, we must now glance at the preceding years. Untrammelled by any pre-con-

[1] Montgelas, loc. cit.

ceived idea of sole responsibility, we shall no longer see them, as is too often the case, from a grossly one-sided point of view, or think we are looking on at an irresistible progression towards an appointed time. We shall refrain from casting the shadow of a supposed predestination on those years of peace, and will endeavour, in tracing the path which led to the war, to discover the crossroads where a choice could have been made between several paths, and determine, in the case of each nation, how far it was restricted as regards the alternatives open to it, and the reasons for the choice made. Then, and only then, we shall be able to come back to the story of the last days; in relation to history its real meaning will be evident.

III

WAS WAR INEVITABLE?

Pre-War Legends.

Before entering on this second part of our inquiry, it will be convenient to dispose of a few more previous assertions which give too simple an explanation of the problem.

"The Gentleman's Agreement."

The first and most crude attempt of all to explain it is the Emperor William's theory, propounded quite seriously in his memoirs, that a Franco-Anglo-American arrangement, concluded in 1897, contained the germ of the world war; but there seems no object in dwelling on this theory, as he is probably the only believer in it.

The Archduke Francis Ferdinand.

We may also dismiss the other legend—less unlikely but equally unsupported, so far, by any evidence—that the Archduke Francis Ferdinand instigated the world war, and that it was decided upon by him and the Emperor William on the occasion of their meeting at Konopischt, in June 1914. That so many legends should have sprung up about the victim of the Sarajevo crime, is probably chiefly due to the retired life he led, and his enigmatic attitude, of which advantage was taken by certain bellicose elements in his *entourage* to represent their own opinions as his. The Archduke, according to the description Czernin has given of him,[1] was violent in his likes and dislikes, embittered by ill health, and more inclined to hate than to love.

[1] Czernin, *Aus dem Weltkrieg.*

Personal slights, real or imaginary, were the origin of his antipathy to the Hungarians, and, in order to understand his political views we must make this antipathy the central and starting point of our inquiry. At the time when, owing to Francis Joseph's illness, there appeared a possibility of his very soon succeeding to the throne, his chief preoccupation, Professor Lammasch tells us,[1] was to abolish or limit the formalities of his coronation as King of Hungary. This feeling of hostility was also at the root of all the great projects he formed for the time when he would reign: in order to diminish the influence of his Transleithan adversaries, he wanted to increase that of the Germans and Slavs, and he went so far as to dream of a trialist Empire in which they would have the same rights as their Magyar oppressors.

It is evident that this idea was not consistent with that of an anti-Slav foreign policy; and moreover, the moment when he was wishing and preparing to remodel the constitution of the Empire, was not the one the Archduke would have chosen for a European war. On the contrary—the memoirs of Czernin and Hötzendorf testify to this—he thought an alliance with Russia would be the best guarantee against impending revolution, and wanted to revive the three Emperors' pact, dear to all the Conservatives: it was the *Leitstern*, Hötzendorf tells us, of his policy.[2] Nor was he originally an enemy of Serbia, chiefly because he did not want to irritate the Russian Government, of whose friendship for Belgrade he was aware, but also because to fight the Serbs would have been playing the game of his personal foes, Ferdinand of Bulgaria and the Hungarian Agrarians. Undoubtedly the Archduke was "militarist", he interested himself both in the army and navy, chiefly the latter. But if these instruments of war were destined to come into action some day by his order, it would not be against Russia; the enemy he had in view was Italy: and this was his point of contact with Hötzendorf, who was a supporter of the same theory in bitter opposition to Aehrenthal. In February 1913, the Archduke and the General

[1] See article by Marcel Dunan in the *Revue de France*, the 22nd of March 1922.

[2] Hötzendorf, loc. cit.

discussed the question of "retaking Lombardy and Venetia",[1] but agreed as to the necessity of maintaining peace in the East.

During the Balkan war, Francis Ferdinand repeatedly interposed to save the threatened peace, either by telegraphing or taking personal steps to influence the Vienna Government; he declared himself opposed to any project of annexation in the Balkans, and, in February 1913, he recommended the demobilization of the Austrian army. Yet, by a process of evolution analogous to the gradual change in the Emperor William's views later on, we find him, in the course of the same year, favouring a "punitive expedition" against Serbia. He had at last realized, he said to the Kaiser at Miramar (May 1914),[2] what a vital danger the Belgrade propaganda constituted for Austria; but, for all that, he did not abandon his former general political opinions. The question is how he managed to combine ideas so incompatible as peace with Petersburg, war with Belgrade, and aggrandizement of the Slavs within the Empire. To understand this, it must first be remembered that federalism and annexationism were not totally different things to the trialists: Czernin had won over the Archduke to a plan by which Rumania, enlarged by the addition of Transylvania, would be attached to the Empire by a tie of dependence; and, in the same way, he began by looking upon the conflict of July 1914 as an opportunity of forcing a *rapprochement* to Vienna on Serbia.

Hötzendorf was also in favour of bringing Serbia into the Austro-Hungarian system; he advocated war as a means of rendering this solution possible, failing its achievement by pacific negotiation. On the other hand, Francis Ferdinand imagined that, under certain favourable conditions, it would be possible to proceed against Serbia without bringing in Russia. He told the Kaiser at Konopischt that, in his opinion, there was nothing to fear from the latter, at the moment, on account of her internal difficulties. He shared an illusion with regard to this which was very general in the Central Empires, and which we have seen was the

[1] Hötzendorf, loc. cit.
[2] Report of the interview (quoted by Montgelas, loc cit.).

origin of their imprudence. We may therefore study these common tendencies without assuming the intervention of a mysterious personage, who was pursued by the hatred of the Pan Slavs perhaps chiefly because he contemplated carrying out the wishes of their protégés for Austria's benefit, who was delivered up to the rabble that they might excuse the crime on the ground that the victim was a demon, as is their wont, and who in reality, during the last few months of his life, merely embodied the dominant tendency in his country, setting limits to it, and retaining his anxiety to avoid a European conflict.

The Military Preparations.

We must also pronounce against all who claim to have discovered in the military preparations proof of one or other side having previously decided to go to war within a given time.[1] Many historians seem indeed to have conducted their inquiries in the hope of finding an incriminating document showing that an offensive had been decided upon for the 1st of August, 1914! Those who have worked on lines of this kind have not contributed anything at all towards the inquiry. All the measures they denounce might have been dictated by the most ordinary prudence during a period of political tension, and could be equally well accounted for in this way. Even when correct, such testimony is of no value except possibly as corroboration of guilt which must first have been established by some other means. Consequently we may disregard all that has been made of espionage in Alsace-Lorraine and Ludendorff's false report, on the one hand, and of the Russian "trial mobilizations", Anglo-Belgian conversations, Schoen's evidence as to the arrangements made in 1914 for provisioning Paris and for a blockade, and the Kaiser's foolish talk, on the other. Moreover, a statement made by Messimy, the French War Minister, makes the situation in July 1914 perfectly clear as regards

[1] Neither the preparations in question here, nor even the Russian and Austrian partial mobilizations in 1913, should be confused with the irrevocable decision taken by Russia to which the last chapter referred. The distinction will be made clear later on.

the preparations then being made by France and Germany. According to him, all the steps taken by Germany were known directly in Paris, and similar steps were taken there without the least delay. Now we all know that the French precautionary measures were by no means excessive.

The Hague Conferences.

It will be advisable to deal at rather greater length with a less irrational theory, which suggests that the attitude adopted at the Hague, and the armament policy pursued by the several Powers, enables us to distinguish very clearly, in advance, between those who were bellicose and those whose intentions were pacific. People who only judge by appearances are inclined to be satisfied with it, for they denounce Germany as having been the chief opponent of disarmament and the first military Power in Europe. But is this a sufficient reason for accusing her of having had aggressive designs?

At the first Hague Conference, in 1899,[1] Germany took the lead in opposing the plan of disarmament proposed by Russia. But this plan had been received with general scepticism in Europe. A French report states that, from the first, no delegate was inclined to agree to a reduction of the military strength of his own country, "or even to a limitation of its development". When it came to voting, the French representative associated himself with the German representative, the Russian delegate was the only one who voted in favour of the proposal, and the Conference decided to adjourn the question. At the second Conference, in 1907, the European Press again strongly opposed the discussion of disarmament. The *Temps*, the *Journal des Débats*, and *The Times* were particularly against it. Moreover, on this occasion, even more than on the first, the Hague Conference assumed the character of a pure farce. Russia herself was hostile to the plan, or at all events if Isvolsky, who had always been opposed to disarmament, could no longer oppose it officially, a prior agreement had been concluded between the three Emperors with the object of

[1] Montgelas, loc. cit.

insuring its defeat, which became certain from that moment. And, in fact, a perfectly platonic resolution was carried, amidst applause from the assembled delegates.[1] Finally, Germany voted against compulsory arbitration in legal disputes,[2] but she was supported by eight States, and three others abstained from voting. Moreover, it was not a question of arbitration in cases where "vital interests" would be at stake, for France and England were opposed to that.[3]

On all these occasions, the difference between the attitudes adopted was one of skill and of interests rather than of intentions. With more diplomatic ability, Germany could have succeeded in getting the proposals she disliked rejected by others, without so definitely opposing them herself. It is true that the mere fact of her not having agreed to any restriction being put on the effort she was making to prepare for war was reprehensible, but it was not surprising. This has always been the attitude of the Power which alone can, or thinks it can, bear the burden of intensive armament: there is no antithesis, in this respect, between pre-war Germany and post-war France. In also refusing to accept the jurisdiction of an International Court, on a footing of equality with decadent nations, the rising Empire followed the instinct of all progressive peoples, who want the superiority of strength, population, and vitality they are daily building up, to be demonstrated in the negotiations, Italy having been a case in point in 1923. After, as before 1914, the less favoured Powers replied to this attitude by another but equally dangerous reflex, which was to coalesce against the strongest, in order to destroy its superiority, and everything leads us to believe that the same diversity of interests will give rise indefinitely to the same political differences until the day when, following on a moral evolu-

[1] It was, moreover, a tactical error to try to secure peace in this way. Léon Bourgeois said very truly at that time that "disarmament would be a consequence, not a preparation". Above all, it was essential that it should be preceded by a territorial guarantee, which France was not disposed to give at that time.

[2] In spite of her opposition to the principle, Germany accepted the verdict of a Swedish arbitrator, two years later, in the Casablanca affair, and even supported compulsory arbitration in the draft of the Franco-German Treaty of 1911.

[3] Debidour, *Histoire diplomatique de l'Europe.*

tion, the European system will be entirely altered. Germany lacked moral courage, and was afraid to take the initiative of this new order. She followed the old tendency and allowed conditions favourable to war to be established. That was her mistake. It must not be confounded with a wish to go to war.

Germany's Armaments.

On the other hand, if Germany's armaments seemed excessive and provocative, it was because, *in considering the question, an absolute instead of a relative comparison was always made between the French and German effectives, the armaments and the alliances were reckoned separately, and the two armies of the Rhine were contrasted individually, thus substituting an arbitrary hypothesis for the infinitely more probable hypothesis provided for by the military agreements, namely, a war in which the united French and Russian armies would be pitted against those of Germany and Austria.* If, instead of simply considering the number of German soldiers, we look at the percentage of the population serving in the army, which measures the effort a nation is making and the extent to which military service is absorbing its activities, we shall find that after rising from 1 to 1.09 per cent., between 1871 and 1893, the rate had gone down again in 1914 to 1.05 per cent., thus showing that for the last twenty years the increase in the army had not kept adequate pace with the increase in the population. At the same date the French rate was 2 per cent. of the population.[1]

Whether we adopt this criterion, or compare the extent of the frontiers, the taxes paid *per capita* for military expenditure, or the strength of the standing armies, all scientific discussion of disarmament would have gone against France, not against Germany, as Montgelas and Kühl have pointed out. If we compare the total strength of the Dual Entente forces with those of the Dual Alliance, we shall find a difference of more than a million to the disadvantage of the latter. If we compare Germany's military

[1] In France 82 per cent. of the men liable for service were enlisted ; in Germany only 53 per cent.

chances in 1900 with what they were in 1914, we shall find that she certainly had not augmented her technical strength sufficiently to compensate for the fresh danger created by the Franco-Russian military preparations and the change in the diplomatic situation, which released the French troops from the Italian frontier, made them available for the defence of the north, and guaranteed them the certain co-operation of 100,000 English troops. This shows the fallacy of discussions regarding the priority of military reinforcements, which, moreover, it is not always so easy to prove. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was *diplomacy that led the way, armaments followed.*

The Anglo-German Naval Competition.

The naval question is analogous. There again, no Power was inclined willingly to make sacrifices in the cause of peace. England took the initiative in proposing to limit construction, because she was the strongest naval Power, just as she showed herself favourable to military disarmament because she neither had nor wished for a conscripted army. *In the one as in the other case, she tried to arrest the progress of the rival Powers without diminishing her own strength, and thus to increase its relative value.* At the time of the Anglo-German negotiations in 1912, as at the time of the second Hague Conference, she made the establishment of a relative strength which would preserve her supremacy a prior condition of naval disarmament. The only difference to be noted was that whereas Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman demanded a superiority of two to one in 1907, Winston Churchill was satisfied with sixteen to ten in 1913; England was already getting nearer to the "One Power Standard" she accepted in 1921 as against the United States. But this only proves that, during this period, the British Empire could not keep pace with its competitor. Asquith's Government had to cut down expenditure on armaments in order to carry out social reforms which would enable him to fight the Labour Opposition effectively. It was for this reason that King Edward VII. tried, by persuasion and threats, to secure a direct agreement

from the Emperor William, at Cronberg, in 1908, and subsequently exerted his influence with the Emperor Francis Joseph, in Vienna, to induce him to put pressure on Germany with a view to arresting naval construction. It was also for this reason that the British Cabinet started *pourparlers* in Berlin in 1912, through the medium of Sir Ernest Cassel, and on the initiative of Lloyd George and Winston Churchill. After Lord Haldane's subsequent visit to Berlin, the Anglo-German difference was clearly defined: Germany estimated that she could carry on the competition with less difficulty than England, and that time was working for her; in limiting her construction she would consequently be making a concession to England; for this she wanted to exact a political price (a treaty of neutrality) which, on the other hand, her adversary was not disposed to pay. *A conflict of interests, a struggle between an established Power and a budding one endeavouring to secure recognition: there was no question of morality.*

Was the War an Economic Necessity?

We should also like to dismiss a commonplace, too frequently repeated, namely, that the war was an economic necessity, and therefore inevitable. No doubt, antagonism of this nature was at the bottom of England's hostility to Germany. But if England lost some markets by which her rival profited, she secured others, and her trade continued to increase rapidly.[1] Moreover, she would not, in any case, have risked a war, for the sake of her trade, which would put a stop to it altogether. No one understood better than Grey himself—Germany's adversary—the terrible economic and social consequences of an appeal to arms. "Whatever the issue", he said in July 1914, when contemplating it, "one thing certain is that it will end in ruining industry, commerce, and the power of capital. It will be followed by revolutionary movements". And again, war being declared, he said, "We shall have Labour Govern-

[1] It is true that German competition appeared to have been responsible for British emigration on a large scale, but this was more an independent phenomenon, which took the form of unemployment after the war, and corresponded to a real decay of England's economic power.

ments in every country after this ".[1] It is also true that German trade and commerce had increased to an abnormal extent, and that the constant menace of a crisis, hanging over her prosperity, might have inclined her to resort to extreme measures in order to secure more stable conditions.

Economists, also dominated by the moral tyranny of our day, have often represented the history of German industrial progress as the realization of a deliberately Imperialist purpose. *It should be regarded rather as a natural process, resulting from geographical conditions, which made economic conquest a vital necessity.* The only part played by free-will was in expediting a necessary evolution, or giving it fresh chances. The original phenomenon was over-population. This inevitably compels nations either to allow emigration on a large scale (and unfortunately no powerful and prosperous country has ever been known willingly to consent to make over its human output to rival States) or to develop its own industries sufficiently to support more workers. The latter decision rapidly leads to a two-fold result: agricultural production, exposed to the competition of other industries, diminishes, and is insufficient to support the industrial population, which necessitates the importation of food supplies; industrial production exceeds the needs of the home consumer, and necessitates looking for markets elsewhere. This has the double effect of increasing the growth of trade and of dependence on foreign countries. An increased output of industrial production having been decided upon, it must naturally be balanced by finding purchasers wherever possible. In addition, the progress of science in Germany contributed in itself to encourage exportation: by leading to the manufacture of new and costly plant, it necessitated a system of rapid sale, in order to pay off the liabilities. But exportation was as difficult as it was indispensable for Germany: her mines were both near their foreign competitors and at a distance from the sea, which added to the cost of transport; they had to send their products abroad, and yet they could not compete with English coal

[1] Supplement to the Austrian Red Book, III. Conversation with Mensdorff.

even at Hamburg. Hence the employment of artificial methods of combating the natural inequality: integration; formation of syndicates of producers jointly endeavouring to increase consumption; a rash policy on the part of the banks, and dumping.

It might well have been asked whether the results obtained by this system could be enduring, and it was a source of anxiety to many German industrialists. Some, no doubt, cherished dreams of escape by forcible means. In their case the daily strain led to a silent hope for war which would turn to enthusiasm when the die was cast; this would give rise to dreams of tariffs and fiscal control which would become plans of annexation later on. But there is a very great difference between this and deliberately wishing for the conflict; provoking a rupture, even of a temporary nature, with foreign countries, in a country so dependent upon them; plunging, for fear of a crisis, into a more terrible crisis, and seeking expansion by means of a war which would result—as we have seen—in closing markets everywhere, and they did not go so far as that. The economic solidarity of the nations was never so apparent as immediately after the war. Until then, attention had been diverted from it by competition, but it nevertheless existed, and exerted a secret influence. There is no documentary evidence to show that the business world took any step to induce the German Government to go to war. Amongst industrial owners and merchants in touch with the Emperor, or whom he employed, were, on the contrary, men like Ballin and Rathenau, who worked for peace, and the influence of financial circles never seems to have been of much account, unless during the 1911 crisis, when it was strongly exerted in favour of peace, like that of the city in 1914.

Economics and Politics in Germany and Europe.

Even if we consider pre-war history on broad lines, it will be evident, whatever may have been said as to German diplomacy having represented industry, and the Kaiser being the "Empire's leading commercial traveller", that *Germany did not pursue the policy of expansion she had the*

means of pursuing, or rather that she sacrificed its success to the pursuit of plans of another nature. In economic negotiations she advocated free-trade and equality, without trying to secure anything unfair to her rivals. In China and Africa she demanded the "open door". In 1902 she proposed to enter into partnership with France for the construction of the Bagdad railway, on a footing of equality. The advantages she secured were due to circumstances or the superiority of her engineers, commercial men, and products. In 1904, she did not avail herself of Rouvier's offers, which would have enabled her to colonize part of the Moroccan coast. Later on, she did not avail herself of the help England offered, with a view to the aggrandizement of her Empire outside Europe. Sir Ernest Cassel, who was authorized to make overtures in that sense, remarked in his report that he found the Germans "did not seem to be greatly concerned about expansion", and "were not troubling the least about their over population".[1] The organization of the German Fleet did not point to its essential object being to defend the Empire's commerce and colonies; it did not fly the German flag in far distant seas, but remained concentrated near the metropolis, an instrument of defence against European alliances, or of menace to them: Winston Churchill made this clear to the Dominion Ministers on the 11th of June, 1912, and went so far as to describe it as a "luxury" in a famous speech he made a few weeks later. Tirpitz, in his memoirs, regards it chiefly as a weapon to serve high policy, a means of guaranteeing Germany independence, diplomatic authority, and peace, through fear. In discussing his book, Lord Haldane writes: "The great thesis of the book is that the only way to preserve the peace was to make Europe fear German strength, and that this imported such battle fleets as would attract allies to Germany for protection, and would thus, in the end, weaken the Entente. England was the real enemy".[2]

In reality, Germany's policy was governed mainly by considerations of prestige. Bismarck had always considered that

[1] Quoted by Winston Churchill.
[2] Lord Haldane, *Before the War*.

consolidation of Germany's European position ought to be the aim of every realist statesman. Like him, but at a time when Germany was nevertheless launching out into world policy, and seemed more concerned about expansion than defence, Holstein, who secretly inspired the Wilhelmstrasse from 1896 to 1906, never ceased to regard all Germany's undertakings in distant parts of the world as a means of increasing her ascendancy in Europe.[1] When Germany sided with Russia and France against Japan in 1896, it was not with the object of making economic conquests in the Far East, but of putting an end to the Franco-Russian alliance, and entangling Russia in Asiatic complications, in order to secure more assured ascendancy in Europe. When the Kaiser landed at Tangier, Germany was not on the look-out for a colony, but trying to break up the Anglo-French alliance; Holstein and Bülow[2] both had this aim in view, in spite of their differences.

In all the European crises, the claims Germany put forward, without maintaining them to the end, were means rather than ends: she only made them in order to prevent or break up an alliance which menaced her, or at any rate to test its solidity, and she abandoned them in exchange for a modification of the diplomatic relations. Over-weening anxiety for her security, hardly distinguishable from a desire for ascendancy, was what inspired her most diverse acts, but is not this the case in all countries? The British Government always very distinctly put naval before commercial supremacy, and thought more of England's strength than of gains. They went so far as to favour Germany's colonial expansion, during the last few years of peace, as an inducement to her to scatter her Fleet: this doctrine was even expounded to the representatives of the Dominions in 1912.[3] Austria, instead of keeping the Serbian market, as she could have done, allowed her exports to that country to go down from 60 per cent.[4] in 1904 to 19 per cent. in 1910, in the interests of a Hungarian minority which relied for support on racial

[1] Hammann, *Vorgeschichte des Welthriegs.*

[2] The latter wrote: "We can only pursue world policy on the foundation of European policy. . . . A policy of distant adventure would soon lead to a crisis in our evolution, if not to catastrophe."

[3] See Winston Churchill, loc. cit.

[4] Of the Serbian imports.

hatred. In 1903 and 1911 France did not hesitate to abandon a large part of Morocco to Spain without its being absolutely necessary, whilst at the same time she refused to share or collaborate in any way with Germany: the political tension rendered what was considered justified by the hope of an Entente in one case, impossible in the other. *Very often it was more a case of feeling creating and aggravating the conflicts of interests, than of its being influenced by them.*

No doubt secret economic ambitions played some part in the political aims that dominated the situation in Europe. We are now arguing in a vicious circle, for had an ascendancy of some kind been definitely established in Europe, material benefits would have resulted from it from the first by a natural process. Each nation would have had a larger or smaller share of concessions: newly discovered territories, the liquidation of dismembered States, etc., in proportion to its recognized influence. The apparent distrust of the possibilities may have been due, to some extent, to more extensive gains having been sought, and with greater eagerness. On the other hand, the economic rivalries, even if kept outside politics, necessarily reacted on the military outlook. A sense of economic dependence increases a people's feeling of insecurity, and induces them to try to obtain military guarantees. The frontiers within which they can be blockaded are plainly visible in peace time. The construction of a railway from Constantinople to Bagdad facilitated the concentration of the Turkish army, and put the Straits, otherwise an easy prey, farther out of Russia's reach.

No one can think of disputing the connection between the phenomena. *But our intention is to show that if conflicting economic interests had power to bring about war in twentieth century Europe, it was only when they revived questions of prestige and sentiment by their repercussions on diplomatic relations, and thus enabled the Governments to organize the patriotic propaganda which led the peoples to consent to the war.* Economists may tell us that the iron-ore and coal question was at the root of the Franco-German antagonism, or the colonial rivalry between an over-populated nation in quest of territory, and an under-populated nation in quest

of human beings in the same region—but we know very well that the factors which roused the combatants against one another were the bitterness felt on account of a past war, and fear of invasion. This is not an academic discussion, for our conception of the determining causes of war, and the means of preventing it, must depend on our opinion on this point. *We look upon the change of which we have spoken as having effected a veritable metamorphosis. Antagonisms between peoples and diplomatic combinations, passions and alliances took possession of the problems and transported them very far from the material ambitions which had sometimes originated them. By introducing moral values into the controversies, they made the average transactions by which conflicts of interests can almost always be adjusted, impossible. They transformed compromises into humiliations, which called for revenge—and thus the course was shaped towards war. It is on this political plane that we must deal with the opposition between the ambitions, and without assuming that it was inevitable.*

Pan-Germanism.

We shall equally refuse to admit that the preponderance of the Pan-German element was responsible for it. It is always difficult to say exactly what the prevailing tendency of a nation's public opinion was, looking at it from a distance, particularly when it was only very imperfectly expressed by its representatives, as was the case in Germany of 1914. Even if one tries only to deal with indisputable facts, everyone will put a different interpretation on them, according to his or her inclination. The remarkable increase in the strength of the Socialist Party (from 1,400,000 in 1890 to 2,108,000 in 1898, and 4,400,000 in 1914), might or might not seem more remarkable than the very little influence it had on foreign policy; in the same way it might be questioned whether the condemnation of the Zabern incident, or the expressions of sympathy received by the officer concerned, threw most light on the state of feeling in Germany, or whether to attach more importance to the fault found with the Kaiser by the Reichstag, or its servility with regard to power. One will say that the Press, as a

whole, showed Liberal tendencies; another will reply that it did not faithfully reflect the nation. Proofs will be brought forward of the pacific spirit of the working class, and the belligerent tendency of the military men and students.

Amidst all these conflicting indications, we think it possible to distinguish some that were consistent: the development of the Nationalist spirit in the younger generation during the last few years of peace—a phenomenon common to almost the whole of Europe; and, more characteristic of Germany, the apathy of educated opinion, and lack of independent criticism, capable of controlling the Government. These psychological factors enable us to understand certain important events; they explain, for instance, no one having taken any steps to call a meeting of the Reichstag Foreign Affairs Committee during the decisive weeks of July 1914; and its having been so easy to get ninety-three signatures to the manifesto issued by the German professors.[1] But although the study of these phenomena may contribute to solve the problem of responsibility, it is not in any way an answer to our inquiry which would make it unnecessary to go any farther.

Philosophy and Politics.

No doubt, if we picture the economic and political curves described before the war, as having extended over a very long period, we should end in imagining an antagonism so violent and irreducible that it would have been sufficient in itself to bring about the war. But the philosopher's view is not that of the statesman. The latter's horizon is more limited; he sees the forces contending against one another, and must choose between them, refusing to believe that the matter is settled in advance. Moreover, when historians

[1] Nothing is more significant as regards this than the inquiry made of them by Hans Wehberg in 1919: one of them explained that he had telegraphed his support of the manifesto without having read it, and had afterwards vainly asked to see the text; another that, in his opinion, the intellectual forces ought also to serve the material interests of their country in time of war; a third that he did not trouble much about politics, and had confidence in the Government because they had maintained peace for so long.

come to the conclusion that accomplished facts were inevitable, it is very often through a simple optical illusion. It is better to think, with Churchill and Loreburn, that if a war can be averted it may be prevented altogether. As the latter remarks, a revolution in Russia, which was amongst the daily possibilities, would have sufficed to upset all the calculations of European diplomacy. But without wishing to re-make history here, we need only remember how constantly the Imperial Government hesitated, to be sure that they were not impelled by any irresistible force ; and this justifies our dealing with the question on the diplomatic plane. *We shall find clear indications of the conflict of tendencies in the conduct of Germany's foreign policy, just as a rapid glance has already enabled us to establish the preponderance of politics over economics. Contrary to so many propagandists who have expended their energies in trying to discover what determined the course Germany took, without first having decided what her aim was, we hope to find both the proof and the explanation of this by merely studying her foreign policy.*

IV

THE EAST AND EUROPE

If it were necessary to discover, at all costs, the element of fatality which certain persons try to introduce into pre-war European history, as an excuse for their mistakes, it would be, to our mind, the obvious impossibility of maintaining the *status quo* in the East.

Austria's Balkan Policy.

Albert Sorel said that the moment the Turkish question was considered settled, the Austrian question would arise. His prophecy has been more than fulfilled, for the two questions arose together, and an attempt was made to solve them concurrently. *Austria-Hungary had created this solidarity herself, by invariably insisting on the maintenance of the status quo in the Ottoman Empire and in the constitution of the Dual Monarchy.* This policy[1] might have prevailed, at all events for a time, had it been supported by constant and vigilant intervention in Balkan affairs. Austria had this in her power: first from 1878 to 1885, when a friendly dynasty was reigning in Serbia, and Russia considered that country an Austrian sphere of influence; then from 1897 to 1907, when Russia's entanglements in Asia made it impossible for her to intervene in the Balkans; and even after that, when Isvolsky was Foreign Minister, for he showed a disposition to be friendly at first. But throughout the whole of that time Austria adhered to a strictly cautious policy, on the principle that she had more than enough territory, and had no interest in extending her Empire.

[1] Hoyos, *Der Deutsch-englische Gegensatz und die Aussenpolitik Oesterreichs.* Kanner, *Katastrophenpolitik.* Molden, *Graf Aehrenthal.*

The Germans, and still more the Hungarians, encouraged this policy, for their chief concern was to preserve the balance of power between the nationalities which formed the Empire, *but at the same time as this policy of non-intervention, and for the same reasons, they favoured an anti-Slav policy within the Empire. They thus stirred up the racial question, and at the same time would not allow it to be solved.*

Nothing but a bold scheme of decentralization would have deprived the Serbs of their grievances. But it would have entailed complete reorganization of the State on a trialist basis, and although the Archduke Francis Ferdinand went so far as to dream of this, it may be doubted whether he would have found many statesmen in the country to follow him on that path. Failing these heroic resolutions, satisfactory diplomatic relations might have been established provisionally with Serbia, based either on a *rapprochement* between the dynasties, or an economic agreement. The first method was abandoned after the assassination of King Alexander, when a sovereign came into power who was allied with the Radicals, and had to pursue a Nationalist policy to maintain his position. The second was subsequently rejected through the influence of the Hungarian Agrarian party, whose aim was to keep out Serbian imports. From that time forward, the conflict grew more bitter year by year. The Serbs saw their most civilized fellow-countrymen cut off from them and divided between four different Governments (Austria, Hungary, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina). They knew that the Vienna Government were determined to prevent their realizing their national aspirations in the direction of Jugo-Slav unity, and their economic aspirations to a maritime port. On the other hand, in spite of the forces on either side being so disproportionate, the Serbian danger was really vital for Austria, because it was chiefly an internal danger. She threatened war, but was menaced by a revolution.

This dual aspect of the Slav question became very evident when, after every Serbian victory, the excitement was seen to increase in the Dual Monarchy's southern provinces. And moreover, the speeches made by her enemies left no

doubt as to their intentions: in 1909 Milovanovich, the Foreign Minister, said in the Skuptchina: "Austria must renounce her claim to be a Balkan Power", and Protich, the Radical leader, said: "Austria must renounce her claim to be a Great Power".[1] It could be foreseen that, after vainly trying to solve the Serbian question by securing promises of goodwill, first under pressure of threats (1909), then by employing Bulgarian force against her adversary (1913) and after having had to record King Peter's double victory, Austria would be all the more inclined to settle the dispute by an appeal to arms, and that *war would break out the moment Russia was strong enough to assure Serbia of her support, and thus enable her to accept the combat she desired.*

Occidentalism and Slavophilism in Russia.

For long past the Petersburg Government had hesitated between a *Western* policy, which would have been limited to dividing the Balkans into spheres of influence, and a *Slavophil* policy, which aimed at uniting the Southern Slavs under Russian protection, and the conquest of Constantinople. At the time of the war of 1878, Gortchakoff and Ignatiev were the respective spokesmen of these two schools of thought. The western tendency predominated. The Tsar and Gortchakoff said that they made no claim to Constantinople. In June 1876, at Reichstadt, it was decided that in case of a Russian victory Constantinople should be a free city. As recently as in 1891 Giers formally assured Ribot that Russia made no claim to Constantinople.[2] Yet, in 1896, the Tsar Alexander III. being dead, a Cabinet Council decided, following on a massacre of Armenians, and at Nelidov's suggestion, to "create the incidents" necessary to enable them to take possession of the Bosphorus; but at the last moment, Nicholas II. changed his mind.[3]

During the succeeding years Russia was crippled by

[1] Quoted by Bethmann-Hollweg before the Reichstag Committee of Enquiry.

[2] Yellow Book on the Franco-Russian Alliance.

[3] On account of technical difficulties, Sazonov explained in 1913 (*Livre Noir*); see also Witte's memoirs.

her struggle in Asia, by the revolution, and by the consequences of her defeat. Therefore she reverted to the policy of Balkan conciliation: in 1903 she signed the Mürzteg agreement with Austria, which fixed the boundaries of the two countries' separate spheres of influence. But directly her recovery was assured, she automatically resumed her ambitions, and the Slavophil policy again inclined to predominate. Certain elements in the nation became increasingly imbued with a vague desire to conquer Constantinople, in order, as Dostoievsky said, to start a crusade against "corrupt western ideas"[1]; and, on the other hand, the question of economic interests, which called for the free passage of the Straits, was becoming more pressing. Max Hoschiller assures us that it was the Donetz industrial owners who gave the impetus to the Russian push towards Constantinople, at a time when official circles still inclined to the Far East. To understand the importance of this question, we need only remember that Russia's imports and exports by sea were respectively double and treble the amount (in tonnage) she imported and exported by land, and that the Black Sea was of most importance to her maritime commerce, as more than a third of Russia's imports came via the Bosphorus. In 1911 and 1912, the Turco-Italian war, which involved diminished trade and increased rates of discount, showed clearly how much inconvenience could be caused to Russia by the Straits being closed.

Isvolsky's Policy.

To these influences Isvolsky's personal weight must be added. Having begun by pursuing a "Western" policy, he subsequently negotiated directly with Austria, and conceded her the right to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina in return for a promise of help in a settlement of the Straits question favourable to Russia—which was literally abandoning the Slav cause for the sake of Constantinople.[2] But he made the mistake of not stipulating for sufficient

[1] Hoschiller, *La Russie devant Constantinople*.

[2] Isvolsky confined himself to advising Milovanovich to make an outcry about the annexation, in order to secure "economic concessions" (see Crozier's recollections).

delay to enable him to carry on the necessary diplomatic campaign, and when Aehrenthal precipitated matters, and effected the annexation, simply giving a few days' notice, Isvolsky, his "accomplice and dupe", was not in a position to profit by the circumstances. After this blow, he became violently Slavophil, broke off the negotiations that Aehrenthal wanted to begin with him again in 1910, and first tried to solve the Straits question by direct negotiation with Turkey, combined with *pourparlers* in London and Paris, the object being to secure free passage of the Straits for Russian warships; then, having failed in this, he elected to negotiate with only the Balkan States.

From that time, the Russian Government considered that the question of Constantinople could only be decided by force. In 1913 Sazonov, taking up Ignatiev's theory, gave Poincaré plainly to understand that the internationalization of Constantinople, which would be the most favourable result of a Congress, would be tantamount to the domination of Russia's most powerful enemy, and that she must demand surer guarantees.[1] Miliukov said, about the same time, that unless it was guaranteed by a fortified territorial enclave, the free passage of the Straits would be of little value.[2] Conquest was therefore considered necessary, but how could it be realized without war? *Moreover, the adoption of a Slavophil policy was, at the same time, choosing strife with Austria.* The Balkan League could not be formed against Turkey alone. The little Slav States had rival ambitions there, and the difficulties of apportioning a limited share to each would lead to a speedy break up of their alliance. It was above all necessary for the Russian diplomats to steer Serbia and Bulgaria in different directions, and if one were to be aggrandized at the expense of Turkey, to compensate the other at the expense of Austria. The two sick men had to be killed at the same time, so that an agreement might be based on the joint liquidation of their estates. If this idea was not formally expressed in any pact, it none the less represents the almost invariable direction of the policy pursued, it had the irresistible attraction for every one of being the most simple solution.

[1] *Livre Noir.* [2] Hoschiller, loc. cit.

The Balkan League of 1912.

The project of a Balkan Alliance was originally only directed against Austria-Hungary. According to a telegram from Panafieu,[1] the Russian Chargé d'Affaires suggested the idea to Guechov early in 1911, and the first *pourparlers* took place in Belgrade, a few months later, under Hartwig's direction. This was just the time when Tcharikov, the Russian Ambassador in Constantinople, was negotiating a direct agreement between Russia and Turkey, and trying to arrange that the latter should eventually join the Balkan League: therefore the allies' first offensive certainly would not be directed against her.[2] Moreover, shortly after that, Prince Alexander of Serbia and Milovanovich both told Bogitshevich[3] that it really was a question of an alliance directed against Vienna, and that "Serbia's aspirations in Austria-Hungary were soon going to be realized". But the Turco-Italian war broke out almost immediately, which gave Serbia and Bulgaria a favourable opportunity of first realizing their eastern ambitions. In October 1911, Milovanovich, confronted with this new situation, explained his plans to Guechov: he proposed to attack Turkey, but only after having secured Russia's support; and "to keep quiet" for the moment, "for the Powers had decided to localize the war".[4]

On the 25th of February, 1912, a treaty of alliance was signed under the auspices of Russia, who was accepted as arbiter by the contracting parties. Traces of the original plan, directed against Austria, were still to be found in it; on the one hand, Bulgarian co-operation was provided for, in case of Serbia being attacked by Austria; on the other, Poincaré himself pointed out, in a memorandum drafted immediately after his visit to Petersburg in August

[1] Yellow Book, I. No. 24.

[2] "I do not exclude in the future", Sazonov said to Louis as lately as on the 5th of April, 1912, "the possibility that Turkey may join" (Yellow Book, I. 25). On the other hand, since 1909, the necessity for a Slav war against Austria and Germany had been explicitly stated in a Russo-Bulgarian military convention.

[3] Bogitshevich, *Kriegsursachen*. English translation, *Causes of the War* (Allen and Unwin).

[4] Guechov, *L'Alliance Balkanique*.

1912,[1] when the text of the Serbo-Bulgarian agreement was submitted to him for the first time, that, in fixing the frontier for the partition of Macedonia, as stipulated beforehand, the Convention had established it "without fixing any limit to Bulgaria towards Salonica, or to Serbia towards Albania", and that the Treaty "consequently contained the germ, not only of war with Turkey, but also of war with Austria." And on the 15th of October he wrote to Paul Cambon:[2] "If Austria knew the purport of the Serbo-Bulgarian agreements, she would make it a grievance against Russia, and, in any case, she would not allow them to be carried out".

Revival of the Constantinople Question.

The Petersburg Government did not wish for immediate war, they preferred to keep the united Balkan forces in reserve against the day when Russia would be ready to enter the lists; they were satisfied, for the moment, with having secured recognition of her moral suzerainty, as being in itself a considerable success, and flattered themselves that they would be able to keep the Balkan peoples in check till the right moment. When the latter attacked Turkey, against their advice, on the 25th of October, 1912, Sazonov censured them roundly, in an interview. But he either could not or would not restrain them. In reality the Balkan peoples had been able to get their own way ever since the signature of the treaty, by threatening to divulge it. Now that they had made use of their power, the Russian Government had necessarily to adapt themselves to the new position, to follow the road thrown open by their rebellious protégés, and be prepared, in these circumstances, to seize Constantinople. In fact, the Slav States were, at one and the same time, Russia's rivals and allies. They could bring her nearer to her goal without obliging her to intervene, by augmenting her racial influence in the Balkans and weakening Turkey; and they could also raise the question of the fate of Constantinople, and compel Russia to show her hand. Everything depended on the extent of their victory.

[1] Yellow Book. [2] Yellow Book, I. No. 184.

Contemplating the possible issues of the conflict, Isvolsky said, in a letter of the 23rd of October, 1912,[1] that, in case of the Balkan peoples gaining a complete victory, they must be prepared for "a great European war, general and decisive", and, in case of the Turks being victorious, for "public opinion being very much excited, which would make it morally incumbent on them to come to the rescue of the Slav States"; he was also of opinion that, in the event of the war being long and indecisive, there would be internal troubles in the Ottoman Empire, which might lead to Russian intervention: war was consequently probable, in any case. As a matter of fact, a few weeks later, when the Bulgarian army was approaching St. Sophia, Sazonov sent word to Poincaré that "the occupation of Constantinople by the Balkan allies would cause the simultaneous arrival of our Black Sea Fleet before the Turkish capital" (November 4th). The successful resistance of the Ottoman army on the Tchataldja lines saved Europe from this intervention.

But the Constantinople question remained open. Sazonov remarked more than once in his correspondence that the Balkan war had created conditions which would make it easy for Russia to exert pressure; he advised Isvolsky "not to make too positive declarations of *désintéressement*, and, in general, to avoid giving any guarantee that would tie our hands, and might be an obstacle, in future, to the Straits question being solved conformably with our interests".[2] To judge of the development of Russia's policy during the last few years of peace, we need only compare the reports of the three Ministerial Councils of 1908, 1913, and 1914, published by the Bolshevists.[3] In 1908, Stolypin said plainly that Russia was not in a position to go to war, that he did not wish the troops mobilized in case of Balkan complications, and that Russia "must rely entirely on the ability of her Foreign Minister". In 1913, the Cabinet contemplated the possibility of military intervention in

[1] *Livre Noir.*

[2] Siebert, *Diplomatische Aktenstücke.* English translation *Entente Diplomacy and the World* (Allen and Unwin). Telegram from Sazonov the 28th of November, 1912.

[3] Pokrowski, *Drei Konferenzen.*

Asia Minor, but resolved that no step should be taken without complete agreement with France and England. In the course of the discussion, Kokovtzov and Sazonov said, in reply to inquiries, that war with Germany was "not desirable in principle".

In February 1914 *it was admitted for the first time that the conquest of Constantinople could only be "the result of a European war", and the Foreign Minister was commissioned to prepare "political conditions favourable" to that end.* From that time onwards, the smallest pretext would have been sufficient to set the Russian ball rolling. The Petersburg Government were no longer even willing, as in 1911, to agree to the Straits being provisionally closed. In April 1914 the Tsar, who was afraid of this, in the event of a Turco-Greek war, said to Paléologue: "I would even resort to force to reopen them".[1]

Balkan Peoples and Europeans.

This growing rivalry between Austria and Russia was bound to multiply the chances of war that were in the natural order of things in the Balkans. *Even apart from their action, peace was very easily broken there.* Two Empires in dissolution were an irresistible temptation to nations still incomplete. The racial confusion and general lack of moral sense aggravated the daily quarrels; the first made it difficult to find just solutions, and the second, to get them accepted. Appealing in their turn to the principle of nationalities, the Balkan States found in it the ferment of an offensive spirit, of which the western nations had set the example. And, on the other hand, they had not arrived at the stage of civilization and industrial development which makes peace the *summum bonum* to great Powers; from their point of view, victory might be more profitable than deadly. Determination to wage war against Austria, and the necessity for it, formed Serbian Ministers' usual subject of conversation—many diplomats can testify to that.

In such an atmosphere, in which fighting is regarded on all sides as in the natural order of things, inquiry into the

[1] *Livre Noir.* Paléologue to Doumergue, the 18th of April, 1914.

question of "responsibility" is literally inconceivable: its existence has never occurred to anyone. The problem with which we are concerned could only arise when the conflict spread to the members of the European concert. Were the "nations who had their place in the sun" going to consent to be drawn into a war by the semi-barbarous Balkan peoples, to lose the advantages they possessed for their benefit, to come down again to their inferior and narrow status of nationalism and poverty? *The history of our times is the history of this abdication.* It was virtually accomplished in 1914. Austria appealed in vain to the principle of class distinction between European and Balkan peoples, to secure localization of the conflict, although it was admitted by Sir Edward Grey. At that time the only aim of such arguments was to distribute privileges between ambitions of the same nature. We must now try to understand how this abdication was possible.

End of the Bismarckian System.

The most conspicuous change in the history of pre-war Europe was the substitution of a system of balance of power, dividing Europe into two hostile groups, for the Bismarckian domination. The Germans have thrown all the responsibility for this on to the perfidy of their enemies and the incompetence of Bismarck's successors. They forget that the Chancellor's diplomatic work perished chiefly because the circumstances attendant on its foundation had ceased to exist. It had not been possible to renew the Russo-German re-insurance treaty after his downfall; but it no longer benefited Germany, for it obliged her to recognize Russia's freedom of action in Bulgaria and Constantinople,[1] and left the Russian Government at liberty to decide the fate of the Austrian alliance, without giving her, in return, any effective guarantee against the Franco-Russian *rapprochement* which was being brought about even before Bismarck's fall, by our supplying Russia with arms and a first loan (1885). The offers of an understanding or of alliance made three times over by England, between

[1] Hammann, *Vorgeschichte des Weltkriegs.*

1898 and 1901, were rejected by the Wilhelmstrasse, because they were afraid of not being able to get Austria to join, and of being drawn into an Anglo-Russian conflict, and, above all, because the state of public opinion since the Boer war prevented their surmounting these obstacles.

Then again, Germany's appearance on the world-political stage made it more difficult for her to form diplomatic alliances. It was the natural result of her industrial development, which obliged her to look for markets, was accompanied by naval construction, and called for the protection of a Fleet. These were unalterable facts, and Germany could not have been driven back within her former limits by a statesman. "Bismarck", Bülow writes, "showed us new paths by following the old ones to their limit".[1] True, the old Chancellor succeeded for a time in maintaining paradoxical friendships between rivals, but it was impossible to go on indefinitely "juggling with diplomatic balls", as William I. put it. *A time was bound to come when the rivalry of interests would react on diplomatic relations.*

Formation of the Triple Entente.

The English alliance, in particular, could not have been more than an abstract idea, destitute of all reality. Winston Churchill shows us very clearly in his memoirs how England's policy was gradually modified by the appearance of a German rival on the scene. In 1904 this led Admiral Fisher to begin concentrating the British naval forces, which were scattered over the world; in 1912 the continued competition decided England to enter into international agreements, to enable her to divide the naval work with her associates. It was then that she entrusted the defence of the Mediterranean to France; two years later, when the war broke out, she was on the point of entrusting the defence of the Baltic to Russia. By this means she would continue to rule the seas, in spite of the relative diminution of her power, at the same time having her Fleet at her disposal and ready for action; but she exercised this control partly through the medium of other Powers, and thus risked

[1] Bülow, loc. cit.

becoming dependent on them. In fact, the development of the alliances corresponded very closely with the requirements of national defence.

Since the beginning of the century the British Government had been resolved to abandon the traditional policy of splendid isolation, having realized the danger of it during the Boer war. They made successive offers of alliance to Germany and France, with perfect indifference, and it was only after being rebuffed by the former that they decided on taking advantage of the *revanche* spirit which was latent on the other side of the Rhine. Edward VII. and Delcassé carried out their project in defiance of public opinion. The King went to Paris in spite of his Cabinet being uneasy; he was hissed, and people shouted, "Long live the Boers!" but he smiled and said he had not heard anything, whilst, to cover the uproar, Delcassé exclaimed, "What enthusiasm!"[1] The agreement of 1904 was signed. In addition to that, Lord Hardinge tells us, King Edward had, since 1903, contemplated an Anglo-Russian Entente to complete the Anglo-French Entente. The first of these projects could not be carried into effect until after Isvolsky came into office, having been delayed by the Russo-Japanese war, and then by the opposition made to it by Witte, to whom it was submitted in 1905, but they were formed together. Thus it will be seen that *the Triple Entente existed in embryo before any German provocation or French intervention.* It originated in the naval competition between England and Germany, and, as the competition grew keener, its bonds were proportionately more closely drawn, conformably with the principle on which it was based. The documents signed were evidence of its progress, but this was still more clearly shown by the distribution of the French and English squadrons, which "swiftly" developed "a sense of mutual dependence between both navies".[2]

Germany's Mistakes.

The Triple Entente was consequently largely an *automatic* phenomenon—the coalition of interests which always makes

[1] Article in the *Daily Mail* by Lord Hardinge, 1923.
[2] W. Churchill, loc. cit.

a stand against a rising Power. But unquestionably the rulers of Germany made mistakes which very much facilitated and helped to precipitate the formation of this association. They went on too long trusting to the *élan* acquired while Bismarck was in power. They left the vital expansion of the German people to work itself out alone, without providing the necessary channels; thus the stream spread instinctively in all directions, rousing enmity everywhere. No doubt the Berlin Government was confronted with the difficult task of "putting in an appearance in places where there are already fortunate possessors",[1] and they were unable to accomplish it without friction. *But a Bismarck would have known how to choose between his enemies, and how to limit his ambitions in order the better to satisfy them.* The Chancellors who succeeded him were incapable of making the necessary sacrifices in time. In spite of this, peace was maintained as long as Russia was, as it were, absent from Europe, but when she returned from Asia the field of action was too limited to satisfy her.

This want of foresight was partly due to inability to see things as they really were. The authorities in Berlin had, more often than not, adhered to antiquated ideas. Bismarck, in his old age, thought it necessary to insure against dangers which had ceased to exist, such as an alliance between France and the Vatican. The Kaiser believed peace could be maintained through the solidarity of the dynasties. Holstein left the Triple Entente out of his calculations, and persisted in laying down as a dogma the impossibility of an Anglo-Russian *rapprochement*, which had so long been maintained by interpreters of diplomatic history. In 1909 Bülow thought the enemy coalition which was ultimately formed, was broken up for good. "There will be no further attempt", he wrote, "to give the Anglo-German antagonism the importance of a general policy. . . . Germany's continental power has torn the net of encirclement". The congenital political incapacity of the German people also played its part. Their overbearing and tactless behaviour, and belief in the permanence of victories won

[1] Hammann, loc. cit.

by force, were indicative of the least prepossessing side of the national character.

But lack of unity of purpose contributed more than anything else to Germany's mistakes. The constitution of the Empire seemed to combine all the conditions requisite to insure a stable policy, but, Bismarck gone, the Emperor became all powerful, and he was the most changeable person in the world. Through his intervention, personal influences affected the course of events, which would have been of no avail under a Parliamentary system. In addition to that, it must be remembered that this impulsive sovereign was not advised by a Foreign Minister with stable traditions and a definite policy. In 1905 Edward VII., amazed at Germany's sudden changes, said to Eckhardstein: "Who is in authority in Berlin?" In 1912 Haldane found the Kaiser, Bethmann-Hollweg, and Tschirschky, openly at variance; and in 1914, from Tschirschky, who was furthering war, to Lichnowsky, who was trying to preserve peace, and Schoen, deceived by his Government, to Pourtalès, deceived by his adversaries, German diplomacy presented a picture of the most complete anarchy. Then again, the Wilhelmstrasse was not in sole control of foreign policy. Bethmann-Hollweg and Schoen tell us how the Minister of Marine interfered in both small and great questions, deciding on the general orientation of policy as well as on the choice of consular agents.

These conditions were responsible for an arrogant and indiscreet policy, which was all the more foolish because it did not pursue any excessive material claim, and made enemies to no purpose. The German Government offended the Great Powers and affected to despise the lesser ones.[1] Quite a false impression of their real intentions was conveyed by what they said themselves, and the most alarming interpretations of them reached the outer world. Berlin said: "We want to be feared, so as not to be attacked", and echo repeated: "Germany wants to ride roughshod over the universe".[2] She allowed the psychological moment for making her claims to pass, and then, when they were

[1] Schoen, *Memoirs of an Ambassador*, Chapter I.
[2] Czernin, loc. cit.

unexpectedly urged, they appeared unnecessarily harsh (1905). She tried to make a solution that had already been reached look like a German victory (1909). She seemed to hesitate between several opinions, finally accepted an indifferent solution, and withdrew after having thrown her sword into the balance (1911). *It was chiefly this perpetual "to-and-fro" procedure that made her policy incomprehensible, and reacted each time on the hatred she had aroused: a feeling of revanche produced by her menaces gave place, when she showed signs of weakening, to a belief that she had been bluffing, and was after all not to be feared: people persuaded themselves at one and the same time that she wanted war and would not go to war; these contradictory and confused impressions inclined them to adopt a resolute attitude in reply.*

THE EASTERN CRISES AND THE FRANCO-GERMAN CONFLICT.

Yet, in spite of Germany's arrogance and the jealousies by which she was surrounded, none of the crises which were periodically renewed in the Balkans had led to a European war until 1914. *There had always been a line of demarcation between eastern and western affairs.* Are we to attribute this merely to Russia's temporary weakness, and to consider that the risks of war increased in proportion to her revival, which encouraged her to be less tolerant of the progress of her adversaries? At all events, it will be convenient to call attention to an analogous but quite distinct factor which modified the diplomatic situation.

Whether the inevitable conflict in the east would become general depended absolutely on England, France, and Germany, for Russia and Austria were on the watch and prepared to take up arms the moment they wavered.

If we are to believe Bogitshevich, England's representatives had been instructed, ever since 1909, at all costs to prevent the eastern crises from becoming general; and in 1914 she still maintained this point of view, as she refused to intervene until France and Belgium were drawn into the conflict. "Our idea", Grey said to Cambon on the

29th of July, "has always been to avoid being drawn into a war for a Balkan question".[1]

In the Austro-Russian quarrel of 1909 France, too, had adopted an attitude of great reserve. Pichon telegraphed on the 13th of February definitely refusing to give Russia any military assistance in the Bosniac dispute.[2] At that time the official Press discreetly supported the opinion Hanotaux expressed in the following terms in an article in the *Figaro*: "Europe wants peace. . . . What does it matter to our French peasants whether Bosnia and Herzegovina are occupied or annexed?"[3] In 1910 Pichon, who had just concluded an agreement with Germany with regard to Morocco, said that he did not consider he had any right to regard a similar attitude on the part of Russia with distrust, and he signified his approval of the Russo-German conversations at Potsdam.[4] This was the same policy, in a more practical form, as Caillaux pursued when he settled the Moroccan question with Germany by mutual concessions, without appealing to Russia, and thus creating a precedent to her advantage. *In short, during the whole of this period, it was felt that the Franco-Russian alliance ought to be tempered, at the two extremities of Europe, by private agreements concluded with the adversary, which neutralized it, and this was a sure guarantee of peace.* These were the "European" considerations Germany had in mind at the London Conference in 1913, when, as even Poincaré admitted, she joined England and France in endeavouring to exert a restraining influence on Austria.

Now in 1914, *directly the Balkan crisis arose, France and Germany abandoned their tradition, whilst England adhered to hers. They took up the quarrel actively, and this time it set the whole of Europe in a blaze. Having established this, we come to the heart of the problem, and are led to regard the Franco-German antagonism as the pivot of European policy and the cause of the dual evolution which brought about the war.*

[1] Blue Book, No. 87.

[2] He wrote that a European conflict must be avoided, and that French public opinion would not understand war being brought about by a question which did not affect Russia's vital interests. (Quoted by Renauld, *Histoire de la Guerre.*)

[3] Quoted by B. Molden in *Graf Aehrenthal.*

[4] *Livre Noir.*

V

FRANCO-GERMAN RELATIONS

France and Germany after 1870.

The history of Germany's French policy between the two wars is chiefly that of a long and clumsy effort to propitiate, which took different forms according to circumstances, and even extended to harsh acts.

After the war of 1870, Bismarck was dominated by fear of French *revanche*. This seemed to him inevitable, as he wrote to Count Arnim, unless Germany took steps to avert it, such as disarmament or political *rapprochement*. In order to achieve his end, he resorted to a system of combined advances and threats—the velvet hand and the iron glove. He first tried to arrest France's military recovery by the pressure he put on her, then, not having succeeded, he adapted himself to the new situation and openly aimed at a *rapprochement*. This tendency was first shown in the discussion of Balkan affairs; in 1876 and 1877 France and Germany worked in collaboration, and Bismarck went so far as to offer Waddington the presidency of the Berlin Congress. The Chancellor then tried to extend this unanimity to colonial policy. Through the medium of Saint-Vallier, he encouraged France to develop her empire in the Mediterranean basin, "her natural sphere of expansion", and submitted a project to her of a "balance of maritime power", the idea being that Germany and France should combine to keep England in check. The precise form these advances took was the offer of an African colonial agreement, which Freycinet refused, for fear of the Chancellor changing his mind, which would have left France to face England alone.[1]

[1] See Bourgeois and Pagès, loc. cit.

The Triple Alliance.

It has been said that the sincerity of the proposition was belied by the simultaneous formation of the Triple Alliance. But, to those who are familiar with the terms and history of this alliance, it seems clear that originally it was not of an aggressive character.[1] It was essentially a conservative pact, intended to insure the solidarity of the monarchies against revolution in Europe, "an Insurance Co., not a society for acquiring property".[2] No doubt Bismarck saw that it might be the basis of a different policy, to be pursued as a counter-blast to the Franco-Russian *rapprochement*, should the latter materialize. And in course of time this is what happened. But the Austro-German alliance of 1879 did not concern France in any way. The territory of the two Empires was not mutually guaranteed, and Austria had given no undertaking in case of a Franco-German war, even if France should be the aggressor. It was only in 1882 that the Italo-German alliance gave Germany the guarantee against a French attack which Austria persisted in refusing. Nor was it till 1887, after France had refused Germany's offers of understanding, and at the height of the Boulangist excitement, that this alliance assumed an offensive character. Germany then promised that she would support Italy in a possible action against France, and favour her plans of conquest. But the Italo-German alliance only retained this character for a few years, and the contracting parties did not take advantage of it to make any attack. Moreover, Bismarck was guaranteed, during this period, by a Mediterranean entente between England, Austria, and Italy, which virtually insured peace.

Germany's Vain Efforts.

After Bismarck's fall Germany lavished still further attentions on us: a fresh proposition of concerted action in Africa was made in 1894, an invitation was given to the French Fleet to attend the opening of the Kiel Canal in 1895; a project was set on foot by Hohenlohe of a "conti-

[1] Pribram, *The Secret Treaties of Austria-Hungary.* [2] Bülow.

nental league", which would prevent England from continuing to profit by European dissensions; and a statement was made to our Ambassador by Bülow, when he came into power, in which he descanted on the advantages of co-ordinating the two policies, or, at all events, to use his own expression, of a "spontaneous parallelism". It was only when France rejected their overtures[1] that the German Government turned back to England, and signed the African agreement with her of the 5th of September, 1898. In 1899 the Marquis de Noailles wrote to Delcassé that the Emperor was favourably disposed towards a *rapprochement*, and that it might be brought about "without too many difficulties, and without derogating in the least from our national dignity".[2] In 1900, France having agreed to a Russian proposal of intervention in London, in concert with Germany, with a view to putting a stop to the Boer War, Germany, wishing for a more stable entente, proposed a mutual territorial guarantee, which Paris refused.

Even during the period of Moroccan tension Germany did not abandon her hopes. In 1905 Henckel von Donnersmark, being sent on a mission, discussed the project of a Franco-German alliance with Rouvier, with the Kaiser's approval. In 1909 Bethmann-Hollweg said he was in favour of economic collaboration in Morocco. In 1911–1912 he wanted to supplement the Moroccan agreement by a general agreement. It was in this hope that the Chancellor accepted the minimum conditions of the French Government, in spite of strong opposition from the Pan-Germanists. He trusted, he wrote to Caillaux, that the treaty signed "offered a basis for development and for progressive confidence in the Franco-German relations".[3] Poincaré himself admitted that the Germans were well disposed towards us at that time. In 1912 he wrote: "The German Government seems obstinately bent on a *rapprochement* which nothing but complete reparation for the past would render possible".[4] In short, with variations

[1] In the meantime Delcassé had succeeded Hanotaux at the Quai d'Orsay.
[2] Quoted by Pagès from the archives.
[3] Quoted at the Caillaux trial.
[4] Quoted by Pagès from the Quai d'Orsay archives.

in their tactics, they consistently aimed at reconciliation until 1913, when, finding all their proposals rejected, they were persuaded that France wanted war, and turned their whole attention to strengthening their armaments to insure their defence.

Bismarck's Political Philosophy.

During this long period Germany tried to put Bismarck's political philosophy into practice. The latter was much more anxious to consolidate his work, in the last half of his life, than to extend it. Having extorted France's signature to the Treaty of Frankfurt, he wanted to secure its moral ratification, which he would have considered a fresh success. In a letter of the 20th of January, 1885, Baron Courcel defined his programme as follows: "To deaden our memories, and turn our thoughts from the past to an uncertain future, in order to accustom us better to the present hard conditions". And Bismarck himself said: "My wish is that the time should come when you could forgive us Sedan, as you have forgiven Waterloo".[1] *Only he did not wish France to be able to profit by his being well disposed towards her to make secret preparations for her revanche. He wanted the situation to be clear, to have a frank reply, which he sometimes seemed to demand with ill-mannered haste.* He claimed the right to know whether he was to take the menace of a peril in the west into his military and diplomatic calculations, or whether he could safely disregard it. *He was trying to find a stable basis for a firm policy, preferring peace but not fearing hostility.* Hence his system of the Scotch douche, which he thought would lead France to choose a conciliatory policy by showing her plainly the advantages of unanimity and the dangers of a conflict. In course of time, Germany added many fresh ambitions to Bismarck's programme, but they brought her chiefly into conflict with Russia and England; she always pursued the same conservative policy, on broad lines, with regard to France, and was even more inclined to seek alliance with us, in proportion to the number of

[1] Pagès.

fresh enemies she made by her "world policy". But the old system was carried on with less ability, the arrogance of the diplomats cast doubt on the sincerity of their intentions, and, moreover, Germany's increasing strength in itself made any agreement concluded with her seem unequal, and this would have been unendurable to a proud people. Consequently, the effort made for so long was unsuccessful; the French thought that it was only an ill-advised campaign against their independence, the offers of alliance being merely a clumsy device which ill concealed the intention of establishing a protectorate; and everyone, recalling the years before the war, will remember the periodical alarms which occurred during a troubled peace. It will be convenient to make a brief successive study of the more important of these Franco-German crises, that we may try to understand how it was possible for them to give rise to the misunderstanding we have just described.

The 1875 Alarm.

The origin of the 1875 incident was the publication by the *Post*, on the 8th of April, of an article in which France's military preparations were spoken of as being calculated to give rise to a conflict in the near future. Bismarck had already held out threats of a preventive war on several occasions: on the 14th of August, 1871, in a conversation with Gabriac; on the 14th of January, 1874, in a conversation with Gontaut-Biron; and even, on the 1st of January in that year, in a diplomatic circular note—but always saying that he would only make up his mind to act if assurances of the French desire for *revanche* were supported by evidence, and accompanying his threats with expressions of a desire for peace. This time the warning was given with more decision, and it was renewed in the interviews between Radowitz and Moltke and the representatives of France and Belgium, as well as in a statement made by Count Münster to the Foreign Office. The matter was settled by diplomatic intervention on the part of England and Russia, followed by general assurances of peaceful intentions; but, for some weeks, it had roused

strong public feeling against Germany and her bellicose designs.

To what extent was the Chancellor responsible? What were his real intentions? A letter he addressed to the Emperor William I. on the 1st of August, 1875, tells us this very accurately. "Count Münster", he wrote, "may have spoken of the utility, from a theoretical and academic point of view, of attacking France at the right moment, just as much as Count Moltke, although I know nothing about it, and he has never been instructed to say anything of the kind; but it may be said with truth that to leave France to believe that she will never be attacked, whatever the circumstances and whatever she does, would not be a guarantee of peace. I would not urge Your Majesty to go to war now merely because the adversary may be better prepared later on, any more than in 1867 in the Luxemburg question; in such matters it is never possible to anticipate the ways of divine Providence with sufficient certainty. But it is not advisable to give the adversary confidence that, whatever happened, we should wait till he attacked us. Nor am I inclined to find fault with our representative if he has chanced to say something to that effect".[1]

Perhaps those who had made the menacing remarks may have also cherished a secret hope Bismarck did not express, of preventing the French military law from being passed. *But in any case the Chancellor would not have gone to war to achieve that object.* In the same *Reflections and Reminiscences*, in which he does not hesitate to admit the intentional alteration of the Ems telegram, he assures us that he would have retired rather than have consented to let loose a war whose first result would have been the formation of the Triple Entente. A preventive war, he explains a little further on, could be nothing but an absurdity from a diplomatic point of view. Why should the German Government have imperilled the "Three Emperors' Alliance" they had just formed? Why should they have chosen to submit their policy to the judgment of the European Congress which would inevitably have been the outcome of a fresh war?

[1] Quoted by Andler, *Le Prince de Bismarck.*

If the Chancellor is to be believed, we should even have to regard the 1875 alarm as nothing more than an affair got up by Gontaut-Biron and Gortchakoff, and the first success scored in the encirclement of Germany—the statements made by the military chiefs, revived and deliberately misrepresented, having been the *point d'appui* necessary for a pre-arranged grouping of diplomatic forces. Charles Andler seems inclined to share this opinion. "Its being known that Bismarck had long since lost all inclination for war enabled people to turn any of these fulminations to account against him", he wrote. Be that as it may, the fact remains that the only achievement of the year 1875 was Germany's diplomatic humiliation and Gortchakoff's noisy triumph, which, as the Tsar Alexander said, pleased his "senile vanity". We agree with most historians that there was no real danger of war. Let us merely write that *in* 1875 *German bluff enabled us to execute a skilful diplomatic manœuvre.*

The Schnaebelé Affair.

1887.[1] A state of tension was brought about in 1886 by the dispute between Germany and Russia on the subject of Bulgaria. A war seemed impending, to which, our Ambassador in Berlin wrote, France could not have remained indifferent. The situation was aggravated again, a few months later, by the action of General Boulanger, the War Minister, in strengthening our armaments without consulting his colleagues. Bismarck was afraid a military dictatorship might be set up in France, and replied to these preparations by counter-measures—higher bidding which is always conducive to war. It was just at this time that Schnaebelé, a police superintendent at Pagny-sur-Moselle, was arrested in the course of an interview with his Ars colleague and accused of being a spy. What grievance had France? That the arrest was made on French territory? The inquiry held proved that it was made on German territory, and Schnaebelé himself ended by admitting it. Schnaebelé's innocence? He admitted his guilt, and the French Government thought fit to dismiss him for this,

[1] See Reinach, *Gambetta.*

when the matter was at an end. That Schnaebelé's colleague called him? From the beginning of the negotiations Herbert Bismarck undertook to liberate Schnaebelé if it were proved that his arrest had been, for any reason, illegal.

As soon as the trick played by the German police superintendent was established, the German Government carried out the promise made. The German attitude was consequently irreproachable from a legal point of view. It is true that, at the beginning of the crisis, Bismarck warned Herbette that he would declare war on France if Boulanger came into power, but he also announced in the Reichstag that he "would not in any case take the responsibility of a declaration of war on France". Moreover, General Boulanger was allowed to retain his post in spite of his unconstitutional behaviour; he proposed war twice to the Cabinet, as Grévy admitted to the German Ambassador,[1] and when the crisis was over it was Goblet, the Premier, who said to Herbette: "Perhaps it would have been better to have ended all these German quarrels by war".[2]

Tangier and Algeciras.

We shall have to discuss the ground of the Moroccan dispute further on. We will therefore confine ourselves, for the moment, to an inquiry into the diplomatic offensive conducted by Germany. It is here, indeed, that we shall find her aspirations to hegemony most apparent, with the danger of war they involved, but, at the same time, their weak points and limitations.

There can be no doubt as to the underlying motives which influenced Germany's attitude. She had no territorial or economic rights, or even interests, which could be urged in justification of it. The Berlin policy was determined in exact accordance with the military and diplomatic situation. At first indifferent to the Russian defeat, Germany profited by it to try to put an end to the Anglo-French alliance, always adapting her actions to the possi-

[1] See *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette.*
[2] Quoted by Pagès.

bilities she foresaw. As in 1914, a favourable opportunity occurred for her intervention, and she took too optimistic a view of the international situation. Bülow thought that the Triple Alliance could be relied upon, that Russia would remain inactive to the end, and that England was not inclined to take any military part in the matter.[1] The Emperor William also thought at that time that in case of Germany's going to war with France and Russia, "England would merely look on at first, and that the war would be over before she had decided which side to take".[2]

These were so many errors tardily recognized which explain Germany's original intransigent attitude and the concessions she made in the end. The reasonable and united opposition she encountered at Algeciras sufficed to make her abandon her idea of breaking up the Entente, except by intriguing. Did it not occur to Eckhardstein himself to ask King Edward to make a pro-French statement, with a view to enlightening Germany and putting her on the right road? A precedent which ought to have been adhered to nine years later. On the other hand, in embarking on this ambitious undertaking, the Berlin Government were still careful as to their legal position, and their intervention must be associated with Delcassé's imprudence, which alone made it possible. The long silence which preceded the famous Tangier demonstration marks a period when they had no legitimate grievance, for an Anglo-French agreement did not in itself constitute a violation of Germany's rights; but, in the course of the following months, the omission to notify her of the treaty, and the attitude of the French representative, who, according to the Sultan, acted as though he were the mandatory of Europe, gave some ground for her to go upon by enabling her to appeal to the Madrid convention.[3]

The most serious feature of this crisis was Germany's interference with France's domestic affairs. Holstein declared that he would not negotiate while Delcassé remained in power, and Bülow sent Henckel von Donnersmark to

[1] Eckhardstein, *Die Isolierung Deutschlands*.
[2] Schoen, *The Memoirs of an Ambassador*, p. 19.
[3] Winston Churchill remarks in his memoirs that France's case was not a good one.

convey this privately to Paris. But we know now that Germany in reality gained nothing except what would have come about almost immediately of itself. She appeared to have secured Delcassé's resignation (June 6th). But, at the beginning of May, Rouvier had sent word to Eckhardstein that Delcassé was virtually out of office, having already been relieved of the direct conduct of foreign affairs, and that he would resign " at latest in three or four weeks' time ", the reason given being the irritation of his colleagues, who would not put up with his tyranny any longer.[1] The majority in Parliament and in the country were at that time resolutely opposed to the policy of adventure which Delcassé's retention in office would have meant. Clemenceau wrote then : " No one would wish to face a war on account of Morocco ".

Similarly, Germany seemed to have prevented the conclusion of the English alliance, offered at that time by Lansdowne. But even before being threatened Rouvier said he would rather not be tied to British help, which might lead France into going further than she intended, without being able to preserve her from the horrors of invasion when the time came ; and besides, even after having refused the alliance, he still had the offer and the certainty of England's armed assistance in case of a German attack. Finally the Berlin view triumphed in the Moroccan negotiations, but while he was still disputing it Rouvier confided to Witte that " personally he attached very little importance to the concessions Germany was so bent upon ".[1] The Algeciras conference took place as Bülow wished, but it was preceded by Germany's recognition of France's special interests in Morocco, and her acceptance of the agreements signed with England and Spain ; and even the Conference was but a French victory over Germany, for it confirmed her alliances and gave prominence to the isolation of her adversary.

Lastly, it should be noted that, when making her demands, Germany also made somewhat ill-timed but perfectly sincere offers of an entente. It was not possible to accept them in this blunt form of an alternative between

[1] Witte's *Memoirs*.

war and an alliance; yet they contained a lesson worthy of being added to those the crisis taught us. Those days of anxiety led us to reflect on the mistakes which had been at the root of our policy. They also showed us the danger, to ourselves and to Europe, of the arrogant policy Germany's consciousness of her military strength led her to pursue in times of tension. *Nevertheless, even on this exceptionally favourable occasion—which would not occur again—we had not found her prepared either to give us unwarrantable provocation, or to declare a war which could not be justified to the German people, or to wage it against an Anglo-French coalition, or to make any of the unreasonable demands of us which might have disguised secret aggressive intentions.*[1] *On the other hand, the proposals she had made of an entente suggested that, at any rate, her diplomatic activities would not necessarily be directed against us. All this showed clearly that the aim of a pacifist policy should have been: to secure a Franco-German agreement before any modification of the status quo; to draw the bonds of recognized defensive alliances closer, and thus quench the vain hopes which might encourage bellicose tendencies in Germany; then, there being no further disagreement or menace, to resume the Franco-German conversations begun in* 1905.[2]

Casablanca.

1909.—The Casablanca incident can be easily summed up: protection given by the German Consul to Legionary deserters, trouble made by the French, and faults on both sides. German proposal that the incident should be ended by a mutual expression of regret refused by the French. German proposal to refer the matter to arbitration. Controversy as to the object of the arbitration. Germany comes round to the French view that the question of fact and the legal question should be enquired into together by the Tribunal. Judgment given by the Tribunal blaming

[1] Delcassé himself always said that this was not really Germany's object. (See his speech of the 24th of January, 1908.)

[2] If this policy had been consistently pursued by the French Government, it is evident that the crises of 1911 and 1914 could never have arisen.

the German Consulate and the French military authorities successively. Reversion to what was the essence of the German proposal, after a trying controversy and solemn legal proceedings. This time again opinions had been expressed on both sides in favour of war, but neither of the two Governments met with any provocation from the adversary which could justify their opening hostilities.

AGADIR.

1911.—*The Agadir crisis was simply the inevitable liquidation of a false position created by the agreements which had preceded it.* The agreement of 1909, which established Franco-German economic equality, subject to the recognition of France's privileged political position in Morocco, had been well received in Paris, whereas the agreement of 1911 brought about Caillaux's fall; and yet the two transactions appear to the historian in the relation of cause and effect.

Since 1898 France's Moroccan policy, like that of Germany, had hesitated between several opinions; it had pursued a zigzag course, from Franco-German agreement to international agreement, from partnership to compensation, and we were bound by several incompatible obligations. The Algeciras Act had "recognized our special interest while disarming us for its defence".[1] By eliminating Spain and restricting the dispute to a controversy between the two enemies, the agreement of 1909 deprived us of the support of Europe; but, on the other hand, the economic equality conceded to Germany, and the reservation imposed on France's rights, prevented our directly exercising our political power, and, by favouring delay and the Maghzen's manœuvres, kept up disorder in the country. Hence the necessity of intervening at Fez, two years later, in view of the Sultan's financial difficulties and military impotence. France took this opportunity of again claiming full liberty of action in Morocco, as she was advised to do by General Moinier[2] and all who understood the local conditions from

[1] Tardieu, *Le Mystère d'Agadir.*
[2] Commander of the Expeditionary Force.

experience and knew that Morocco could only be civilized under compulsion.

This meant re-opening the conflict between France and Germany. The only way of preventing its renewal would have been to act honestly with regard to the division of interests which was the *raison d'être* of the 1909 agreement; but the French Government systematically paralyzed it: in Morocco, by refusing to take any part in the work of the *Société Marocaine des Travaux Publics*, which was formed in pursuance of the treaty; in the Congo, where, after promising to establish a Franco-German N'goko consortium, and then, as compensation for the abandonment of this scheme, agreeing to co-operate in the construction of the Congo-Cameroon railway, they rejected the plan submitted by Germany. "This rebuff has opened my eyes", Kiderlen said to Jules Cambon.

Convinced of France's bad faith, and deceived in her expectations of economic benefits, it was inevitable that Germany should revert to her latent projects of territorial compensation. Everyone with any knowledge of the facts understood this directly they heard of the march on Fez. "We shall have to pay", Jules Cambon wrote. But the inevitable crisis might also be an opportunity for definitely abandoning the perilous agreement of 1909, which exposed France to the risk of the business partnership becoming a territorial partnership, and of finding that she had conquered Morocco for Germany's benefit. Realizing the danger, and wishing to prevent Germany from making claims in Morocco, our Ambassador went to Kissingen in July and exceeded Cruppi's instructions by "talking Congo" to Kiderlen. Caillaux followed his lead. The onerous task fell to him of buying back the "political mortgage" of 1906 and the "economic mortgage" of 1909. He succeeded in doing this by the agreement of the 4th of November.

In order to judge of the policy pursued by the French Government at that time, it will suffice to remark, without going into the details of the negotiations, that it was imperatively dictated by the circumstances. *A Conference was impossible:* it would have restored the Algeciras Act,

which we had outstripped and wanted to get rid of, and it would have gone against us. From that time the only alternative to direct *pourparlers* was war, and we could not accept it without first making sure that our allies would support us. Now, *if England and Russia advised or allowed us to refuse compensation in Morocco, they did not authorize us to refuse it in the Congo.*[1] As to the sacrifices to which France agreed, they were considered in Germany so trifling that the signature of the agreement involved the Colonial Minister's resignation, which meant *that at all events the possibilities of negotiation had been exhausted.*

But meanwhile there had been the "Agadir coup". Another flagrant exhibition of German strength. But was there no excuse for the demonstration? It was made after a long silence on the part of France, following on a violation of the agreements which had been signed. Was it an unexpected departure from the policy Germany had pursued hitherto? Ever since the extension of the French occupation Germany had disputed its necessity, had appealed to the precedents of Tunis and Egypt, and refused to believe it was only provisional. She had raised the question of compensation without receiving any answer. Was there no precedent for it? Spain had already drawn the conclusions from France's illegal action by occupying Larache. Was it deliberately belligerent? The mere choice of a little gunboat like the *Panther* excluded all idea of a naval action or of a landing.[2]

Moreover, the instructions given to Kiderlen and Schoen, and the communication made by the latter on the 1st of July, clearly showed the character of the German initiative: at the same time as he announced the naval demonstration the Ambassador suggested *pourparlers* with a view to an agreement which should replace the effete Act of Algeciras and definitely settle the Moroccan question. It materialized the dispute for which France was primarily responsible. It was an unceremonious method of reminding her of Germany's interests in Morocco and of her power in Europe, but the Wilhelmstrasse did not want war. All that we

[1] Caillaux, *Agadir.* [2] Pierre Albin, *Le coup d'Agadir.*

RAYMOND POINCARÉ. *Photo : Henri Manuel.*

know of Kiderlen's past is in itself sufficient guarantee that he was anxious to preserve peace. He was not one of those Conservatives who look upon war as a good stroke of domestic policy. His view was that even victory would only give Germany fresh problems to solve; then, again, it would be necessary to pay the people the price for their sacrifices by establishing the Parliamentary system. Was it to be supposed that the man who had always expressed these opinions was deliberately trying to bring about a conflict? But there is no further need to speculate as to this, for the German Minister's private letters, which were produced at the Caillaux trial, prove that if he thought it necessary to "polish up the German armour" to induce France to negotiate, he was at least firmly resolved to come to terms with her if possible. He neither wished to get the better of her, nor even to secure part of Morocco (he disclaimed all idea of this from the beginning of the negotiations), and this in the interest of future peace, because the partition would have been a source of constant difficulties, mutual accusations, and strife.

This was his frame of mind at the time of the Agadir incident. But, after a few weeks, the German intervention had brought about dangerous tension, and a war no Government wished for seemed possible. French public opinion was over-excited. Lloyd George had made a threatening speech. The German "colonials" were putting pressure on the Government to lay claim to a Moroccan port and were supported by the Crown Prince. The captain of the *Berlin*, which had been sent to join the *Panther*, requested that his ship might be allowed to play a more active part. The Emperor was nervous: the day after the British pronouncement he summoned Kiderlen to Swinemünd and discussed the possibility of war with him. The Secretary of State, who remained faithful to his objectives, was almost beside himself; he lived in constant fear of his sovereign taking some rash step. The latter did in fact for a moment contemplate mobilizing his Fleet, in reply to a projected change in the disposition of the British Fleet; but Kiderlen came to a private understanding with the English Ambassador to avoid the difficulty. Finally, in August, there

was some relaxation of the tension, and negotiations were begun.

Once more there had been a risk of an attempt to intimidate being transformed into armed conflict, but the danger was averted by the wisdom of France. The temper in the Wilhelmstrasse being what we have described, confidence was felt that it would be possible to find a basis for negotiation and to save peace by diplomatic means. But military imprudence on both sides might have suddenly changed the whole situation. Had a French ship been despatched to Agadir, as some wished, the mere proximity of the two ships might have been sufficient to unloose war. Now in 1911 France's military preparations were incomplete; according to Winston Churchill, the British Fleet could not be mobilized at once; and Dubail reported that Russia would not be capable of intervening at short notice for two or three years.

Under these circumstances, if Germany had criminal intentions, *the trap was not laid where a good many people in France thought.* We were not falling into it by negotiating under pressure from Germany. Experience has shown that even in those circumstances it is still possible to gain a diplomatic victory.[1] *Germany's chance, when this favourable opportunity occurred, would have been if she could have found a pretext for aggression against France, and, taking advantage of her intransigence, have been able to deprive her of the honourable position she had recovered in Europe by inflicting a fresh defeat on her. But two conditions were necessary for that which were lacking: the existence of a German Government who wanted war as an end, and of a French Government willing to be their accomplice.*

Part Played by the Press

In comparing the successive events, as they now appear from the documentary and other evidence, with the daily comments in the newspapers of that epoch, it will be seen

[1] At any rate, this was the most general impression outside France and Germany. Winston Churchill, in particular, writes that it was difficult for England to understand Caillaux's fall at that time.

that on all these occasions French public opinion was misled by a systematic distortion of the facts. This was particularly marked in 1911. The Press led the public to suppose that since 1909 Germany had given up all her rights in Morocco, and affected to look upon her protest in 1911 as a claim without any foundation, mere provocation; and then it spoke of the bargain concluded as a humiliation. The tactics were already being pursued which led in 1914 to the steps taken by Germany in Paris and Petrograd (the 25th and 29th of July) being described as "ultimatums". Even then a warlike spirit was shown in the reports of the negotiations, and the gulf which separated the peoples consequently widened every day.

Alsace-Lorraine.

Such failure to appreciate the truth would be incomprehensible were it not that it was furthered by pre-existing sentimental tendencies. *It would be impossible really to fathom this pre-war history if we did not take into account the connection between the Moroccan question and the question of Alsace-Lorraine.* In the national mind, memories were always blended with the latest impressions. Everything Germany did was put down to rapacity and suspected in advance; every disappointment reminded France of the bitterness of her defeat.

Alsace-Lorraine was thus like a sensitive chord in the heart of France that was affected by the most remote events. A Russo-German difference, the gain or recovery of an ally, fortified the French claim, whilst the German pressure gave it a sort of justification from the defensive point of view. It was possible, by this barometer, to measure the decline of Germany's diplomatic power and the growth of her military menace. Moreover, the feeling of having been wronged had remained strong enough to prevent the conclusion of an alliance with Germany at any time since 1871, or even of a comprehensive agreement, which would have been looked upon as confirming the Treaty of Frankfurt. The most moderate Governments had been unable to do more, to quote Courcel, "than pacify the present and

reserve the future ".[1] Refusal to allow that Alsace-Lorraine was permanently severed from France was the distinguishing mark of patriotism.

So strong a feeling is not satisfied with vague regrets; it must be sustained by projects and expectations. How were the lost provinces to be restored? By Germany's good will? Gambetta had dreams of a day when he might secure their return in this way from Bismarck, thanks to his personal powers of persuasion; but the realists could not wait for this dream to be fulfilled. By means of a system of alliances which, by upsetting the balance of power in Europe and alarming Germany, would oblige her to make some atonement, to restore Alsace-Lorraine in order to appease her principal adversary? This idea was the only possible justification for the Nationalist policy from a pacifist point of view. But it needed very remarkable simplicity to suppose that a country so prosperous, so powerful, and with so much confidence in its destiny and its military power, would not rather go to war than allow such a plot against it to be successfully carried out.

To Caillaux the plan was nothing more than mild confidence in inherent justice, a vain dream for the people to indulge in whilst efforts were made to achieve something practical; and with Poincaré it was accompanied by belief in the inevitable necessity for war. *These regrets consequently involved acceptance of war, if they were not to be vain. And yet France would not realize this. She lived in instinctive expectation of the catastrophe, but without being clearly conscious of it, and persisting in hoping for peace. She refused to accept the status quo, but also refused to go to war. This inconsistency enabled her to remain guiltless, but it was responsible for an element of uncertainty in her policy, of which foolhardy men were able to take advantage to lead the country into war while still retaining its confidence.*

[1] We learn from the German Documents, recently published, that, in 1885, Courcel, and in 1896 Hanotaux (through the medium of the journalist Hausen) had assured representatives of the German Government, that, on condition of certain advantages, France "would abandon *revanche*". But these curious overtures were not ratified by public opinion, or made officially, and did not end in any concrete proposal being made.

The Question of Autonomy.

Moreover, during the last few years of peace, the French Government had been led to define their position through secret negotiations. In the course of forty years of annexation the conditions had somewhat changed in Alsace-Lorraine. After years in which they had adopted an unbending attitude of protest, on principle, the inhabitants had fixed upon a reasonable aim, which they could attain within the framework of the Empire, by forming an alliance with all the opponents of absolutism there, without a sanguinary struggle between the province and the Empire or between France and Germany, namely, autonomy. This new claim was particularly adapted to the character of the Alsace-Lorraine people, who were jealous individualists, thinking more of their regional country than of any other, for in urging it they were seeking, at one and the same time, liberation from the Berlin yoke and recognition of their independence as regards all possible centralization. It also suited conditions of life which, by isolating them morally from Germany and materially from France, encouraged the annexed countries to develop their own resources and be self-supporting.

Germany had adopted a new attitude corresponding to this new attitude. After trying several alternatives, the milder administration of 1910, which established a local Parliament, had been substituted for the stern repression resorted to in the beginning. It still, no doubt, fell very far short of what the people of Alsace-Lorraine wanted. More generous solutions had been considered in Berlin. Schoen, and a certain number of other distinguished Germans, advocated autonomy, but the majority pronounced against it. This was a mistake, as Bethmann-Hollweg admitted later on. But the question would have assumed quite a different aspect if the Germans had regarded this autonomy as an element in a Franco-German bargain, the pledge of a reconciliation which was the constant dream of those who directed the affairs of the Empire. Having already been contemplated as a matter of domestic policy, it might have been obtained as a matter of international

policy. A secret envoy came to Paris in March 1912 to say this.[1] But the French Government showed plainly that they were not disposed to be satisfied with a concession of this kind. From that time the opinion in Berlin was that they no longer sought the happiness of their lost fellow-countrymen, and that, in this matter, they put the interest of France before the interest of Alsace-Lorraine.

In proportion as the loyalty of the people was gradually transformed into a desire for independence, the French seemed to rely less firmly on the right of peoples to self-determination in support of their claim to restoration of the provinces; it looked to our enemies more like regret for a lost greatness, and they associated it with our former sovereigns' dreams of glory and conquest, whose memory still haunts Europe. Was there not already some hope felt in Paris of being able to restore the conditions of 1814, and occupy or neutralize the Rhine, as well as anxiety to reconstitute the France of 1870? We have seen, since the victory, how closely these claims were associated in the mind of the nation, and this helps us to understand how it was that those who sought the reparation of an injustice, who only wanted to detach a foreign body from the Empire, were denounced by the Germans as being hostile to their integrity, and even to their unity, of which Alsace-Lorraine had been the sign and remained the symbol.

Inconsistency in 1914.

Thus, just when the local question was approaching a solution, the Nationalists raised it again. The annexed provinces were like a defective glass, through which our enemies across the frontier could not be seen as they really were. *But for this the painful inconsistency of* 1914 *would not have been possible. The people wanted peace, and yet they went to war; and war would not have been possible without faults on both sides.*

[1] M. Pagès tells us, after having consulted the Quai d'Orsay archives, that "he agreed with M. de Schoen and Prince Radolin, and felt confident of being able to carry on negotiations which would have secured a wide measure of autonomy for Alsace-Lorraine" (*Origines et responsabilités de la Grande Guerre*).

VI

THE CHOICE

THE preceding considerations account for the choice which was made between the two policies put before France at that time, and which the names of Caillaux and Poincaré represent to the multitude. It may be as well, however, to define these adverse views clearly (not so much by quoting what their exponents said, as by giving the reasons for what they did), showing what the difference was between them, and trying to decide whether there really was no alternative.

THE POINCARÉ POLICY.

Most of those who returned Poincaré to power believed that the antagonism between German Imperialism and France's resentment must inevitably be fought out some day. They thought it necessary to make open preparations for the sanguinary struggle by strengthening their armaments and alliances. They were of opinion that a strong policy might, in a few years, create the conditions necessary to ensure a French victory, and, as it had to be faced, they hoped that the conflict might take place at a favourable moment. *When the day came, they thought less of taking advantage of any goodwill or hesitation shown by Germany, in the interest of peace, than of overthrowing her the moment she made a mistake.* Nor did they forget that the day on which war broke out would also be the awaited day of *revanche*. They associated plans of conquest with France's defensive policy, which were kept dark until hostilities were opened, but were then reckoned amongst the objects of the war.

The Caillaux Policy.

Those who supported Caillaux's policy thought, on the contrary, that if the formation of the Triple Entente made a Franco-German reconciliation in some respects more difficult, on the other hand it opened up fresh possibilities. For thirty years France had only been able to maintain a proper balance between her own country and a triumphant Germany, by trying to find friends, and sometimes having to comply with their unreasonable demands. But the growth of the Empire had finally roused sufficient animosity against the Germans for France to be able to choose her friends and have more freedom to treat with them. *The economic evolution had brought about a fresh balance of power.* The question of the Rhine was no longer so absolutely the pivot on which European policy turned; Anglo-German rivalry, and the contest for the overland route to the east, had more to do with framing the alliances.

Up to the end of the nineteenth century France had, as it were, been subject to all the weight of Europe, dominated by Bismarck; now, thanks to these rivalries which had arisen, in which, owing to her very inferiority, she had no part, *she saw the Great Powers neutralizing one another to her advantage. Not being one of the chief competitors, she acquired fresh power as arbiter, and bids were made for her friendship, which was no longer given gratuitously.* The Berlin Government had tried to nip the Triple Entente in the bud, in 1905, by threats; then, having failed in this, they tried to break it up by persuasion. They would have liked to make their first overtures to France: she was the life and soul of the Triple Entente, was morally responsible for its existence, and was also its field of battle and the connecting-link between England and Russia; to win her over would be to disarm the British Empire by depriving it of its continental army. *The danger the Republic thus constituted to Germany might be exchanged for advantages, and Bethmann-Hollweg was prepared to concede them.* It was only in 1912 that the Chancellor turned to England, after seeking collaboration, liquidation, and understanding with France.

Caillaux's supporters say that a realist policy would have aimed first at recovery by means of the alliances, and then, having formed a coalition, would have profited by it to negotiate boldly with the enemy, turning the fear of war to account, but taking care not to be led into it. In the first phase of the negotiations France would have regained equality by her diplomatic activities; in the second she would have made it the basis of a reconciliation. The settlement of the Anglo-French difficulties in 1903 *ought not to have been a point of departure for a policy of encirclement, but a model for a more extensive Franco-German settlement, which it facilitated.*

If the objection is made that Germany would have insisted on such an *entente* being turned into an alliance, and that Alsace-Lorraine, annexed and oppressed, was an insurmountable obstacle in the way of this, its advocates reply that France had enough trumps in her hand to have been able to secure an understanding on this point beforehand. To those who, following up this hypothesis, urge that even in this case the alliance would inevitably have turned into vassalage, they reply that the alliance could have been inaugurated on a footing of equality, and that if it were to degenerate in course of time, it would be due to unequal economic and demographic development; in that case Germany's predominance would show that our country was really going gradually downhill, and even a military victory could not conceal that for long. If anyone suggests that we should not have avoided war by this policy, we should merely have waged it against other Powers in Germany's interest, they ask what forces would have been able to oppose the united armies of France and Germany with any chance of success. If other possible dangers are suggested, they maintain that no one would have ventured to say that he preferred the immediate disaster of mutual extermination; *they insist that Franco-German hostility meant certain war, and a Franco-German entente certain peace, and that the choice was between these two extreme hypotheses.*

The force of this theory must not be ignored: for the last twenty years, and even since the victory, no other durable solution of the Franco-German problem has been

found. The strongest objection that can be raised to it is that a great part of the nation were instinctively prejudiced against it. To have carried on a policy of conciliation without having a majority in favour of it would have been embarking on a hopeless task and giving our allies needless anxiety. The necessary compromises would have been denounced as treason, and every step gained would have brought about a patriotic reaction. Did we not see Nationalism strengthened, on both sides, by the experience of 1911? These psychological difficulties might justify the decision to discard the idea of an alliance between enemies provisionally; or at all events the project ought to have depended on a prior question which we will put as follows: *How far has a statesman power to guide the opinion of his country, to bring its feelings into unison with its interests?* This is a domestic political problem which cannot be dealt with here.

The Possibility of a Third Policy.

Yet, if this bold conception was rejected as impracticable, was that a reason for approving of a policy tending to war? Was it necessary to play with fire for fear of danger, in accordance with the natural bent of Nationalism? In other words, was there no other conceivable policy than those of Poincaré and Caillaux? It seems to us that in refusing to adopt the latter, the truth of the observations on which it was based should at least be recognized, and a correct idea be retained from them of our position in Europe. It was strong enough to make Germany hesitate to go to war and to enable us to act quite independently of our allies. It enabled us to shape our attitude towards all the Powers in the higher interest of peace. Had not France pursued a policy of striking a balance between Germany and England more than once, under the third Empire, a policy Barthelémy Saint-Hilaire explained in theory in his instructions to Saint-Vallier? And had not Italy shown the possibility of pursuing a similar policy, and deriving definite advantages from it, even as a member of one of the enemy groups? *It was all the more incumbent on us to be prudent, seeing*

that the initial object of the Entente had been achieved. Not only had Morocco been conceded to us as a Protectorate, without any liabilities, but disputes which might still arise in interpreting the agreement of 1911 were referred in advance to arbitration by a clause in the agreement. That meant that the question was definitely settled; in other words, that the *only material legal dispute between France and Germany had ceased to exist. All the dangers of war were now centred in the alliances. Morocco had been acquired cheaply, provided we had not to pay the price for it to our partners after the transaction was completed.*

Triple Entente Secret Treaties.

Now France, wishing to form a line of defence against Germany, had only formed a syndicate of conquerors. All that had been agreed upon with England was to give her a free hand in Egypt, but Italy had required an undertaking as to the future. In 1902 we had given the Italian Government a free hand in Tripoli, in return for our free hand in Morocco. In 1909, at Racconigi, Russia, in her turn, sold her the Libyan desert in return for a promise of diplomatic support in the east—and this time she included the Straits in her demands. Finally, in pursuance of the aim which had inspired her negotiations with Italy, Russia organized and presided over the Balkan League in 1911. The interdependence of these secret pacts was such that the smallest change in the Mediterranean balance of power must have incalculable effects. Their aim was to guarantee the equality of the contracting Powers in any circumstances, and in order to maintain this, in the event of one of the signatories infringing the *status quo*, the others were to be entitled to occupy a corresponding amount of territory; all were to make a forward move at the same time, *which was, as it were, compulsory conquest.*

This is how things actually turned out. In 1911 it was the occupation of Fez, as San Giuliano says, that led to the outbreak of war between Italy and Turkey. This, in its turn, created favourable conditions for the Balkan League offensive and precipitated the decision; whilst the

dismemberment of Turkey, as a result of the Balkan peoples' victory, led Russia to contemplate resuming her march towards Constantinople without much further delay. *But it was not to be supposed that this general advance could be accomplished except at the expense of the other Great Powers and of successive repercussions: the first conquest made would be sufficient to affect Germany's position in Turkey and that of Austria in the Balkans.* In addition to that, mutual ambitions created rivalry. The hostility of the Triple Alliances played a part in all the local disputes; the most distant Powers became interested in them; they took up positions and formed groups. Morocco, Macedonia, Albania,—so many geographic labels which merely cloaked the contest for balance of power throughout the world. The consequence was that each country came to look upon a general war as necessary for the satisfaction of its own particular interests. To France's allies, Germany and Austria combined seemed formidable enough to stand in the way of every aim, and their defeat, on the other hand, sufficient to satisfy all ambitions. If they were overthrown Constantinople would be at the disposal of the other Powers, the Slavs would be united, and England would be sure of her supremacy at sea. This was the ideal solution of all the problems, and the fact that so many desired it seemed to make it inevitable. The aim of the Triple Entente was to organize the future, not to preserve the existing conditions, and they could not be changed without war. Moreover, all those concerned were far less afraid of war than of isolation.

The French Danger.

A future could be foreseen full of danger, when each, rather than break the bonds, would follow the first aggressor, in which the direction of the alliance might be entrusted to its most imprudent member. Was France going to further the ambitions of other nations now that she had achieved her aim? Would she save her allies from having to negotiate with the enemy, as she had been obliged to do herself? Would she allow herself to be drawn into war if they could not make up their minds, as she had done, to make the necessary compromises?

VII

CLOSER ALLIANCE

The Defensive Alliances.

All who have any experience of diplomacy know that the character of an alliance depends very little on the wording of the agreement. Considerable changes may take place without its being modified or appearing any different. And, to begin with, the alliance being theoretically defensive matters very little. To be satisfied of this, we need only remark that the Austro-German Treaty and the Franco-Russian Treaty could not properly come into play together, both of them being defensive. But everyone knew that the first shot fired would be the signal for a general conflagration. *In reality, for very simple psychological reasons, it has never been possible for the identity of the aggressor to be a determining factor in bringing alliances into play.* The mere signature of the pact, and the collaboration that follows, create a fellowship and inspire sympathies that responsibility for war does not suffice to alter.[1] Moreover, the vague formulæ of the treaties are in themselves open to very liberal interpretations: it is very rarely that any definition can be found in them of the "aggression"[2] which is to determine the *casus fœderis*, and the heat of the controversy on the origins of the Great War shows plainly how difficult it is to define. It may be made a question of principle by declaring that the one

[1] The opponents of the "Three Emperors' Alliance" in Berlin always appealed to the impossibility of deciding the German attitude in accordance with the idea of responsibility, in case of an Austro-Russian conflict.

[2] On the 30th of July, 1914, Paul Cambon told Grey he anticipated that Germany's aggression would take the form of either a demand that France should cease her preparations, or a demand that she should engage to remain neutral (Blue Book, No. 105). This shows how liberally the term may be interpreted.

who makes the war inevitable is the aggressor—this is the standard adopted in the Franco-Italian treaty of 1902 and the agreement of neutrality Bethmann-Hollweg proposed to England in 1912—or perhaps the one to whom the fact of having to all intents and purposes attacked, or having declared war, must be attributed, as the Austro-German treaty and the Franco-Russian treaty seem to suggest.

After the war of 1870 France adopted the first of these theories to exculpate herself, and Germany the second; after the war of 1914 they reversed their positions. That was carrying on a controversy; no general rule can be laid down in the matter. It is always possible to bring about a declaration of war by obvious and intolerable provocation. But, on the other hand, what is the exact amount of provocation received that justifies a declaration of war? More often than not this question is only decided by the Governments according to their estimate of the military and diplomatic chances.

Evolution of the Franco-Russian Alliance.

The evolution of the Franco-Russian alliance was peculiar, for the only change made in the initial text of the agreement of 1892 was a clause added in 1899 prolonging its duration beyond that of the Triple Alliance. At first it did not seem to be exclusively directed against Germany. The tension which existed at that time between France and Russia on one side and England on the other gave it equally the character of a guarantee against the latter Power, whose accession to the Triple Alliance was, moreover, anticipated by the protocol of 1891. During the whole course of the negotiations Russia had seemed intent on extending the Franco-Russian connection beyond Europe and beyond the Triple Alliance, so as "eventually to secure our co-operation even against England" (Ribot to Laboulaye, the 6th of August, 1891),[1] and also to avoid giving Germany any cause for uneasiness. "The Tsar", Ribot wrote again on the 11th of August, "is anxious that she should not have any reason to think herself directly

[1] Yellow Book on the Franco-Russian Alliance, No. 8.

menaced", and he wanted to make sure, before concluding the agreement with France, that the party in favour of immediate *revanche* was not in a position to draw France into an adventure. When signing it, on the 18th of August, 1892, he further demanded that a fresh article should be added to the Treaty providing that if France provoked war the Treaty should be null and void, and only abandoned the idea on being assured that this was understood.[1]

During the succeeding years the friendly personal relations between the Tsar and the German Emperor, and Russia's undertakings in the Far East, prevented there being any friction between the two Empires. Besides that, the slowness of the Russian concentration gave the stipulations of the 1892 alliance their real defensive character, whatever the intentions of the Governments might be. And again, until 1908, the relations between Russia and Germany were often more cordial than those she maintained with France. In 1896, Osten-Sacken, the Russian Ambassador, went so far as to say in Berlin that, by establishing Russia's control over France, the Franco-Russian alliance assured acceptance of the Treaty of Frankfurt and was a guarantee of peace for Germany. Neklyudov wrote similarly that Russia was keeping a watchful eye on Germany at that time, holding France back, and steering her more in the direction of colonial rivalry with England.[2] During the Russo-Japanese war Germany's attitude was considered in Petersburg more friendly than that of France; and Lamsdorff, the Foreign Minister, said afterwards to Schoen that Russia only kept up the alliance in order to "control revolutionary France". In short, though *the Russo-German treaty had not been renewed, its spirit had been transferred to the Franco-Russian treaty.*

But after Isvolsky's advent another tendency was shown. Russia recovered, she turned back to the west, and her cupidity returned with her strength. Technical improvements enabled her to contemplate taking the offensive, and the Triple Entente was concluded; that is to say, the

[1] Yellow Book on the Franco-Russian Alliance.
[2] *Livre Noir*, Report of the 14th of December, 1910.

Franco-Russian alliance was strengthened and more definitely directed against Germany. In fact, the time had gone by when the contrast between Tsarist Russia and Republican France was sufficient to temper it. Foreign policy dominated everything, and States which least resembled one another were now disposed to combine, with a view to securing a common aim.

Isvolsky and France.

Not only had the circumstances changed, but the Russian Government were in a different frame of mind. Ever since his diplomatic defeat in 1908, Isvolsky had been watching for the time when the Franco-Russian alliance might enable him to take his revenge. Neklyudov's reports [1] in 1910 show very clearly what the idea was in Petersburg as to our ultimate fate. France, he wrote, is subsiding into "moral degradation" and "weakness" through "Radical-Socialist experience and militant atheism". Her "economic and political collapse is certain unless external events intervene to arrest this inevitable course".[2] Hence the resolve to take advantage of her co-operation while it was still of some value. Three years later, Isvolsky spoke of Poincaré's term of office as an opportunity which would not occur again. *Like his Councillor of Embassy, the Ambassador thought the alliance did Russia no honour, and that it could only be justified if his country gained solid material advantages by it. Financial advantages to begin with.* The alliance was kept alive by the circulation of money: Russia borrowed from Paris but subsidized the French Press, and Isvolsky gave his unremitting attention to these transactions.

Diplomatic advantages were also kept in view. He did his best to turn French Nationalism to account without being carried away by it, to divert it from France's natural interests, and connect it with Russian interests. So long as it was a question of Morocco, he adopted a conciliatory tone. In May 1911 he deplored the loss of Pichon, "because he knew exactly what he wanted in Morocco, and was not

[1] Councillor of Embassy in Paris.

[2] *Livre Noir.*

influenced by the Chauvinist party, which exists here as everywhere".[1] But when the Agadir crisis was averted, shortly afterwards, without Russia's intervention, Isvolsky made the diplomatic solidarity of the allies a pretext for claiming France's support in the question of the Straits. Finally, in January 1912, when Poincaré was called upon to form a Cabinet, the Russian Government hastened the conclusion of the Balkan Alliance, and, foreseeing the possibility of a European war, asked for the co-operation of the new Premier, to whom they forwarded a list of questions.

Algeciras and the Agadir Precedents.

France could not remain entirely indifferent to the difficulties in the east of an ally whose help she had asked in the west a few years before; but she could not, and even ought not to, offer more than she had received. In 1905 Lamsdorff's initial instructions to his representative at Algeciras were simply to mediate between France and Germany; and this attitude was only modified subsequently under financial pressure from the French Government, who made the issue of a Russian loan in France dependent on adjustment of the Franco-German dispute. The Ambassador in Spain was eventually instructed to vote systematically for France, and the Allies were able to defeat Germany's spiteful opposition; but even then Witte, according to his own account, officiously "advised Rouvier to be more conciliatory".

In 1911 *Isvolsky himself created a precedent which dictated the policy of the alliance.* During the weeks of the crisis he perseveringly combined counsels of moderation with assurances of friendship. On the 25th of July he said to Caillaux that if France ended in getting "a *pourboire*" it would be a success, and she must be satisfied with it; he added that Russia would "perhaps" back us up. "It would be difficult enough", he said, if it were a question of Morocco, but in any case she could not mix herself up in a Congo dispute; he ended by intimating that her army was not ready. The Tsar said much the same to our

[1] *Livre Noir*, letter of the 11th of May.

representative in Petersburg. It even seemed as though the Russian Government would have preferred Germany's not being entirely shut out from Morocco ; anyhow, Isvolsky advised Selves to make an arrangement which would enable Germany to retain certain economic privileges there.[1]

Scope and Interpretation of the Alliances.

What was France going to do in return ? In August 1912, when Poincaré was on a visit to Petersburg, he came to an understanding with Sazonov as to the scope and interpretation of the alliance. Russia would only give France military help in " vital " questions ; she could not promise it in the case of disputes " outside Europe ". France, on the other hand, would not co-operate with Russia unless Germany were implicated in the conflict. *This put the allies on a footing of inequality from the start, as regards their undertakings.* France would have to take part in a Russo-German war in any circumstances, whilst Russia would not be involved in a Franco-German war if it originated in a colonial dispute. Now it was with regard to colonial matters that differences arose between the two enemies during the whole duration of the alliance. Poincaré's definition of the Treaty was an unqualified acceptance of the obligations originally incurred by France, whilst Sazonov's interpretation limited those incurred by Russia. *Consequently the chances were that Russia would benefit most by the alliance.* This should make us all the more careful to note the changes circumstances brought about in the purport of the initial agreement.

The Three Dangers of the 1892 Convention.

We need only read its text to see that it exposed our country to three risks. (1) France was to come to the rescue of her ally " in case of Russia being attacked by Germany ". Now we know that such an attack would have been the inevitable consequence of any aggression on the part of Russia against Austria. Therefore if the Russian

[1] *Livre Noir*, letter of the 14th of September.

Government decided on an offensive war, France might automatically be compelled to intervene, through the medium of the Austro-German treaty of alliance. (2) France was also to take part in the conflict if the attack came from "Austria supported by Germany". That is to say, she was equally at the mercy of Austria's taking the initiative, if the latter were acting with the approval of her ally. (3) The question of aggression was, as we know, closely connected with that of mobilization. Now what does the Treaty say as regards this? "In case of the Triple Alliance, or one of the Powers belonging to it, mobilizing, France and Russia shall immediately and simultaneously mobilize the whole of their forces, and convey them as near to their frontiers as possible, without necessarily waiting to communicate with one another."[1] This means that France was to reply to Austria's mobilization (the nature of it not being specified) by *general* mobilization, in conjunction with that of Russia; consequently if Austria decided to mobilize, no matter to what extent or what the circumstances might be, it would be sufficient to bring about a state of tension which must inevitably lead to a Franco-German war.

Such a stipulation showed very plainly the diplomatic inequality existing at that time between the vanquished nation of 1871 and the great Russian Empire. It was not in accordance with the wishes of the French Government, and had only been agreed to with a view to expediting the conclusion of negotiations which had been going on for years, Russia having caused continual delay by her innumerable reservations and queries. In spite of the advice given by Freycinet, the Minister of War, Ribot had ended by yielding to the opposition of the Russian General Staff, who refused to distinguish between mobilization of the whole forces of the Triple Alliance and those of one of its members, and abandoning the French text. It was not until after the signature of the Treaty that he realized his mistake, and tried to repair it by asking that at least the clause quoted should not take effect if Austria ordered partial mobilization "on account of some incident in the

[1] Yellow Book on the Franco-Russian Alliance.

Balkans".[1] But this tardy request was not favourably received, and our Ambassador, Montebello, thought pure and simple ratification the wisest course. The initial mistake only involved limited consequences so long as Russia continued to pursue a "western" policy, and in 1891 Giers had given Ribot formal assurances with regard to that. But, as we have seen, "Slavophil" Russia of 1912 did not do so. This in itself immensely increased the chances of a breach with Austria and the danger of the clause in question. On the other hand, the sacrifice to which France had consented no longer had any Russian counterpart, since the hypothesis of an Italian aggression had been excluded by the agreement of 1902.

One of our Government's chief concerns should have been to find some means of avoiding these dangers. We ought, in the first place, *to have refused to countenance any provocation of Austria by Russia; secondly, to have tried to divide the Austro-German allies; to have taken suitable steps to put their solidarity to the proof; anyhow not to have assumed its existence, seeing that it would be sufficient to involve France in eastern complications; and thirdly, not to have allowed Russia to take advantage of the letter of the treaty of alliance to pervert its defensive spirit by bringing the mobilizations into play.*

France and Austria.

Let us begin by noting that Poincaré's Government flatly refused to make the agreement with Germany, signed on the 4th of November, 1911, more comprehensive, as Bethmann-Hollweg would have liked and as Caillaux had thought of doing, nor did they try to negotiate with Austria independently, although Aehrenthal's advent to office seemed to open up fresh possibilities of being able to come to terms with her. It is well known that he wanted to be independent of Germany, and it might have been supposed that France would benefit by this. In fact, the Austrian Minister did adopt a most favourable attitude towards us during both the Franco-German crises which occurred while

[1] Yellow Book on the Franco-Russian Alliance.

his Government was in power. In the Casablanca affair he disavowed the Austrian Consul, and told Berlin plainly that he would not be drawn into a war; and equally, in the Agadir affair, he refused to make the declaration of solidarity Tschirschky wanted.[1] In the course of his many conversations with him, our Ambassador, Crozier, came to the conclusion that he would have preferred a *rapprochement* between the two enemy groups to anything which would bring the Triple Alliance into action, for even a victory would only have intensified Germany's domination. Aehrenthal assured him that his object was to "take reasonably selfish advantage of all the liberty of action left to each of the contracting parties of the Triple Alliance", that "the *Drang nach Osten* was a diabolical invention of Bismarck's brain", and that "France might help to bring about an Austro-Russian *rapprochement* and act as guarantor".[2]

Might not these overtures have been made the starting point of negotiations? In 1908 Aehrenthal had proposed a Franco-Austrian *entente* with regard to Morocco and the East, subject to some economic concessions in Serbia. In 1911 he renewed his offer, making it conditional, this time, on the admission of Austrian and Hungarian loans to the Paris money market. But these suggestions, to which Selves would have agreed in principle,[3] were ignored by the Quai d'Orsay after the fall of Caillaux's Cabinet. The "Balkan peoples", Crozier wrote, have taken the place of the "European peoples".

This is the account given by our Ambassador. It must not be accepted unreservedly. Any help given by France to Austria might have benefited Germany indirectly, and ought not to have been promised without a counterpart. But, in any case, an effort ought at least to have been made to find out whether there was any chance of being able to reach an agreement. Poincaré's own statements,

[1] In the course of conversations with the Russian General Staff in 1911, General Dubail said that, in his opinion, Austria would not take part in a Franco-German war.

[2] Crozier, *Souvenirs* (*Revue de France*, 1921).

[3] We are quoting what Crozier said as to this. Selves, on being interrogated, replied evasively that he did not remember it, adding that he did, as a matter of fact, believe Aehrenthal was well disposed towards us.

however,[1] show that the French Government did not think it necessary to ascertain whether political guarantees could be secured in exchange for any financial concessions we might make, that they continued to be dominated by fear of displeasing Russia, and let the matter drop.

Russia's Military Organization.

Moreover, at that period, the question of Austro-German solidarity had already been settled in a different way, for the diplomatic situation was irresistibly dominated by a military system which the French Government had sanctioned and prepared in conjunction with Russia, and its first consequence was to oblige Russia to endeavour to solve the question of the Straits, in opposition to Central Europe. When Sazonov spoke of the possibility of occupying the Straits, at the Ministerial Council of the 8th of February, 1914, the Chief of the General Staff replied that, in the then state of Russia's military organization, it could not be done without denuding the western frontiers and thus being exposed to an Austro-German attack, whilst, on the other hand, it would be possible to secure Constantinople indirectly in the west; and the Council took his view. *Nor could Russia have waged war against Austria alone. Even if the Russian diplomats had thought there was some possibility of detaching the latter Power from her ally, the military authorities would not have given them the means of fighting her individually.* Russia's mobilization could not be partial, or at least, if it were so for more than a day, that would make general mobilization impossible.

According to a memorandum by General Daniloff, the Quartermaster-General, which Recouly sums up in *Les Heures tragiques de l'avant-guerre,* the units mobilized in the eastern districts had to lay in supplies, to complete their equipment, in districts very far distant from their headquarters. In order to put them individually on a war footing it would be necessary to organize a transport service which, in case of general mobilization being ultimately decided upon, "would so seriously complicate the traffic

[1] *Revue des Deux Mondes*, the 1st of July, 1921.

and upset the arrangements, that it would result in the greatest possible disorder, and mobilization would become practically impossible. . . ." In short, mobilization had to be considered as a whole. Obrutchev pointed this out as early as in 1891, when he refused to consider the hypothesis of a partial mobilization. Dobrorolsky, who was Director of the Mobilization Department in 1914, tells us that there was no technical plan corresponding to the mobilization against Austria-Hungary of which the diplomats talked at that time, and he says plainly that any partial mobilization must have been followed by general mobilization within twenty-four hours, under pain of a real catastrophe. *Consequently, at the moment when an effort should have been made to divide our enemies, they were drawn together by the menace of a common peril, and formidable machinery had been prepared for the hour of the diplomatic crisis which, once set in motion, could not be arrested and in itself made war inevitable.*

Now France had made this military organization a condition of her financial help. In 1905 we had only made the issue of "the loan which saved Russia" subject to the help she was to give us during the Algeciras Conference. In 1912, Kokovtzov, the Russian Finance Minister, had to buy our credit with promises to make preparations for war. In June of that year Verneuil went to Petersburg to state the two conditions imposed by Poincaré's Government: increase in the number of effectives and the construction of strategic railways. Kokovtzov, who was sent to Paris, did his best to resist, basing his arguments on Russian legislation, and pointing out that the great thing was to promote the economic development of his country, which would open up military prospects later on; but he ended by giving the promise, after reconciling the French demands with Russia's needs.[1] During the military negotiations it was the French who took the initiative and suggested the plan of railway construction to the Russians. Their efforts were directed towards putting Russia in a position to intervene rapidly in a war, their ideal being a simultaneous offensive; and, in 1911, Dubail had already

[1] *Livre Noir.*

succeeded in getting the necessary delay, before the Russian army could open hostilities, reduced from twenty-one to fifteen days.[1] *Would the French Government, bound by this military policy, still be at liberty to advise delay in mobilizing in the hour of danger?* In any case these preparations reacted on the political situation, even in time of peace. Dubail said at the Caillaux trial that, with a view to causing uneasiness in Germany and inducing her to concentrate her troops on the eastern frontier and thus relieve France, he had advised the Russian General Staff not to keep their military preparations too dark.

Practical Application of the Franco-Russian Alliance.

At the end of this brief inquiry, we find that the three theoretical dangers whose existence we have pointed out were inextricably involved in the modus operandi of the alliance. In reality there was no choice between mobilization and war, or between an Austro-Russian and a general war. Ought not the inflexibility of the machinery to have been at least a reason for not bringing it into play except in case of absolute necessity? This brings us to the essential question, that of the diplomatic orientation, but with a more definite idea of the extreme and irrevocable consequences it involved.

There was nothing reprehensible in itself in strengthening the ties of friendship between France and Russia. It might lead the French Government to share the responsibilities of Russian Imperialism, or it might, on the contrary, enable them to exert a moderating influence on their ally before too late; it was from the latter point of view that Georges Louis commended it. *The same applies to the assurances of loyalty we lavished on Russia from time to time.* To those who blamed him for this, Poincaré replied with perfect truth: "It was not for me to refuse to renew an assurance which was formally registered in the treaty of alliance." But to circumscribe the question in this way is to feign complete ignorance of the real essence of diplomacy. No French Government had ever disavowed the text of the

[1] *Livre Noir.*

treaty. Yet they had all succeeded in evading its application by availing themselves, on each particular occasion, of the traditional answers by which an ally manages to keep out of complications amicably: France was not ready, public opinion would not understand a conflict over this question, the diplomatic atmosphere was unfavourable, this diminished the chances of victory, they must wait for a better opportunity.

These expressions of opinion as to the chances of success, as to the inclination or capacity of the country, and the warnings or encouragement given or withheld, merely cloak the statesmen's real wishes. The value of declarations of solidarity depends very much on the accompanying circumstances and on the nature and exact limitations of the hypotheses on which they are based. When disputes arise which may lead to an international conflict, the previous understandings reached between Governments are of most importance, for, more often than not, they determine the course of events which either, in themselves, prevent the casus fœderis from arising, or involve its coming into play automatically. Poincaré and Sazonov made that point quite clear. Louis reported, on the 5th of April, 1912, that the Russian Minister acquiesced in our interpretation of the alliance: there would be a preliminary discussion of any subjects that might not be covered by the original pact; "in case of agreement, the alliance would take effect; otherwise the Government taking the initiative would do so at their own risk".[1] Poincaré put the question still better when he wrote: "I took good care not to put, or allow ourselves to be put, into a position which might oblige us to keep our promise."[2] Only this statement is not at all in accordance with the facts.

Poincaré's Foreign Policy.

Directly he came into power, Poincaré showed that he intended to adopt a totally different policy to that of his predecessor. He subordinated the Treasury to the Foreign Office, as far

[1] Yellow Book on Balkan Affairs, No. 25.
[2] Article in the *Matin*, the 20th of December, 1920.

as the issue of foreign loans was concerned. He told Schoen and Isvolsky that he "would not put up with a second Agadir". He explained to the latter, the first time he called on him, that he wished to avoid anything that might emphasize the agreement between France and Germany, which had already been more clearly shown than he liked, by the treaty of the 4th of November. On taking over office, he began by dealing with the Franco-Russian alliance on fresh, more jealous and more exclusive principles. He expressed disapproval of the private conversations between Russia and Germany (which Pichon had encouraged), deprecated the proposed interview between the Tsar and the Emperor William at Port Baltic,[1] and secured a promise that there should be no further dallying of this kind with the enemy. He said that the alliance bound them not only "to apprise", as Sazonov thought, but also "to consult" one another. With a view to mediation in the Italo-Turkish conflict, he proposed a preliminary agreement between the Triple Entente Powers, which would have the effect of showing their resolute attitude and united front, rather than of smoothing over the differences.[2]

These first steps sufficed to show a definite tendency, but they were taken during a period of comparative calm, and it was only when the Balkan war broke out that the new policy could be judged by its work. Directly war was threatened a preliminary question arose. The aggressors had combined under the Russian ægis. *Did not the negotiation of the pact by which they were bound*—described by Poincaré as *"a vrai dire, une convention de guerre"—and the secrecy maintained for so many months with regard to its signature, constitute the initiative without a prior understanding which was to be taken "at the sole risk" of the Power acting thus independently?* The French Government might have remembered that, as Leon Blum has pointed out, the *casus fœderis* did not arise in the case of conflicts resulting from Balkan aggression. In any case, the greatest possible reserve was necessary, for Russia's attitude, as

[1] *Livre Noir*, telegram from Isvolsky, the 14th of June, 1912.
[2] Letter from Isvolsky, the 20th of June, 1912.

Poincaré himself remarked,[1] was such as to arouse "the worst fears". But what did the Premier do? After having increased his authority in the closer alliance, he took advantage of it to speak of a European war to Isvolsky as inevitable and a Franco-Russian victory as certain. On the eve of the conflict he said, in consequence of a statement made by Russia: "If Bulgaria proves not to be in a position to profit by the present opportunity, it will be a serious blow to Russia's influence and prestige in the Balkans. . . ." If Austria were to intervene against Serbia, "naturally that could not be a matter of indifference to Russia, and it would probably lead to a general war. . . ." "To my question, Is there not some way of averting these dangers? Poincaré," Isvolsky wrote, "replied that he found it difficult to make any suggestion . . . counsels of moderation to the Balkan States could hardly have any decisive influence. . . ." And again: "Well-informed and responsible persons view the chances of Russia and France with a great deal of optimism in case of a general conflagration." [2]

During these daily negotiations he invariably interpreted the opinion of the Russian Government, forestalled its reactions, lent it an attitude of offended dignity, of which no sign had been shown as yet, and hoped they would not venture to be less Russian than he himself. The end of it was that his interlocutor could not follow his lead. In June 1912 it was Isvolsky who pointed out the danger of the Triple Entente being controlled by one of its members; it was Poincaré who rejected the idea, suggested by Sazonov, of joint intervention by France and Germany in the Italo-Turkish conflict, on the ground that "it might give rise to incorrect opinions with regard to the degree of political *rapprochement* between France and Germany and point to a diminution in the strength of the Triple Entente; he it was again who, on the 4th of November, took the initiative in a Franco-Russian agreement intended to prevent any Austrian aggrandizement in the Balkans.

[1] To Paul Cambon, the 15th of October, 1912 (Yellow Book, I. No. 184).
[2] *Livre Noir*, letter from Isvolsky, the 12th of September.

Sometimes he said that "it was for Russia to take the initiative" [1] and that he would merely follow her lead, but his assurance of loyalty was not accompanied by any warning which would have qualified it; on the contrary, such assurances *were on several occasions preceded by advice which showed their true character.* When, in the course of the winter of 1912 to 1913, Austria began to make military preparations as a menace to Serbia, Paris again gave the Russian Government to understand that they ought not to remain indifferent, and incited them, even then, to bring the mobilizations into play. Isvolsky wrote: "Our indifference to the Austrian mobilization is now regarded with astonishment and undisguised anxiety." [2] The idea that Russia might not intervene in an Austro-Serbian conflict filled Poincaré "with the greatest consternation".

The attitude of the Government was emphasized by a Press campaign. Isvolsky defended himself by professing a desire to throw the responsibility on to the enemy; he had to make further subsidies to the Press to induce it to make allowance for Russia's moderation. "The idea that France may have to fight for foreign interests is no longer what I shall have to combat, but rather the fear that we may be too passive in a matter which affects the position and prestige of the whole Entente." During the London Conference, assembled to settle the Balkan disputes, the impression made on Benckendorff was that France was the only one of the Powers who did not fear war, or who, "at least, would envisage it without regret". "I saw nothing," he writes, "to indicate that she was actively contributing to the endeavour to find a compromise. Now a compromise would mean peace." [3] In October 1913, when Serbian troops had just irregularly invaded Albanian territory and it was expected that Austria would intervene, Isvolsky wrote: "It is believed here that this may lead to Russian intervention, which, in its turn, would first bring in Germany

[1] *Livre Noir*, letter from Isvolsky, the 17th of November.
[2] Letter from Isvolsky, the 18th of December.
[3] Letter to Benckendorff, the 25th of February, 1913.

and then France. The French Government contemplate this possibility with full consciousness of their responsibility and perfect equanimity, and are firmly resolved to fulfil the obligations of the alliance. They have taken all the necessary steps ; the eastern frontier mobilization has been tested, material is in readiness, etc." [1] In January 1914, when there was a dispute between Germany and Russia with regard to Liman von Sanders' mission, Isvolsky telegraphed that in the opinion of Paléologue (at that time the Political Director) the Russian Government ought to send a battleship to the Bosphorus, even without permission from the Sultan, and keep her there till they had obtained satisfaction.[2] This showed that if the Quai d'Orsay would not tolerate a second Agadir, they at least were not afraid to inflict one on Germany.

These instances show how we are to interpret the conception of the alliance Poincaré explained to Isvolsky at that time, and formulated again to the Chamber during the debate of the 6th of July, 1922. The 1912 Government made French intervention dependent on only one condition, namely, Germany's being a party to the conflict. In laying down rules for the conduct of the alliance, a distinction was made between two separate phases : during the first, which would precede the appearance of Germany on the scene, " active and firm diplomatic support " was to be given ; during the second armed support. *But as the question of responsibility for eventual war was never raised, it can be seen at once that the first phase might amount to simple preparation for the second.*[3] The German intervention which must involve France in the war was either improbable or certain, according to the diplomatic procedure adopted. In certain circumstances to tell Russia that Germany must be implicated in order to secure France's help would be

[1] *Livre Noir*, letter from Isvolsky, the 18th of December, 1912.

[2] *Livre Noir*, Vol. II, p. 223, letter from Isvolsky, the 1st of January, 1914.

[3] Moreover, Poincaré, in reality, provided for the possibility of actions, even in the first phase, which were " not purely diplomatic " (*Livre Noir*, letter from Isvolsky, the 5th of December, 1912), and in any case for " the most active and effective help possible in all steps taken by the Russian Government in favour of the Balkan States " (Letter of the 30th of January, 1913).

simply suggesting to her that she must provoke Austria in order to bring the treaty of 1879 into play. *Finally we must remember that the development of the Russian mobilization made it certain that the conflict must become general at the last moment in any case. There is consequently no practical difference between Poincaré's corrected formula and the one first transmitted by Isvolsky : " If Russia goes to war, France will do so too."* [1] The evolution of the alliance was so marked that the Russian Ambassador felt able to inform his Government of France's " entirely new frame of mind ".

Poincaré and Isvolsky.

This transformation was the work of two strong personalities : Poincaré and Isvolsky. There was little love lost between the two men and they distrusted one another. The Ambassador thought the President " excited ", " arrogant to excess ", inspired by a morbid " *amour propre* ", and injudicious. The latter complained that Isvolsky " attributed ideas to him which he wished his own Government to adopt ". And yet Isvolsky apologizes, in his correspondence, for having to act as " counsel for Poincaré ", and the latter preferred him as interpreter and as a travelling companion in Russia to our Ambassador in Petersburg, Georges Louis, who was a determined pacifist ; he received him every day and accorded him the privilege of exceptional intimacy. " He is most friendly towards me," Isvolsky wrote, " and shows an evident wish to converse with me as often as possible and to enter into the fullest particulars." [2] And in the same way, the Ambassador tried to negotiate with him all the questions that chiefly interested Russia ; exerted himself to facilitate his visit to Petersburg, after having dissuaded his predecessors from going there ; informed him of the Racconigi agreement privately, making him promise not to mention it either to the Cabinet

[1] Equally, according to Sazonov's report to the Ministerial Council of the 31st of December, 1913, Delcassé assured him, on behalf of the Foreign Minister, that " France would go to whatever lengths Russia wished " (Pokrovsky, *Drei Konferenzen*).

[2] *Livre Noir*, letter of the 29th of February, 1912.

or to his colleagues at the Quai d'Orsay ; [1] and distributed funds to the French Press through him.[2]

The truth is that the coincidence of their political ambitions bound them to one another by ties far stronger than those of sympathy. Isvolsky realized what a marvellous chance Poincaré's being in power was for Russia. In his correspondence he invariably laid stress on the importance of his individuality ; said that when the decisive moment came " there were many things which would depend on him personally " ; insinuated that " Caillaux and Clemenceau would not sanction France's intervention in a Balkan question ", pointing out that their partisans attacked the Premier's policy, that even his own party did not wholeheartedly support him, and that opinion in France was pacifist, which was an additional point in his favour and that of his colleagues, Millerand [3] and Delcassé. In return, the presence of Isvolsky—who had made the career of his successor, Sazonov, and who inspired his policy and sometimes adopted a tone of authority towards him—gave Poincaré the means of being consulted with regard to all Russia's projects, of exercising strict control over her, preventing her from making mistakes, and, at the same time, of steering her towards an active attitude during the period in which French strength reached its height—the one also in which he held the power.

The reciprocal position of the two gamblers was at times very curious to note, for as regards intentions it was the reverse of that which marked the tendencies of their countries, and yet it had to be adapted to them as regards facts. The Frenchman was the bolder and more imperious of the two, but he did not intend to declare war, because public opinion in his country would have been against it ; the Russian sometimes followed his lead in moderation, but he was the representative of a Government which aimed at conquest and contemplated realizing its ambitions by

[1] Letter of the 5th of December.
[2] Letter of the 18th of December.
[3] " M. Millerand," Ribot wrote in his memoirs, " helped to revive the spirit of former days in the youth of France. . . . He encouraged us, by his example, to hold our heads higher, and not to be too anxious as to the quarter from which the danger might come."

aggressive means. *The first directed the alliance, the second would bring it into play.* The latter valued France's co-operation as enabling him to take steps to realize a dream of Oriental domination without being too venturesome ; whilst the former saw that Russia's co-operation would enable him to choose the moment for the war he regarded as inevitable, without openly assuming responsibility for it.

Louis recalled, and the Presidential Election.

A tacit agreement was concluded between them in order to increase their personal influence : Isvolsky persuaded Sazonov that Louis transmitted his communications inaccurately, and then, armed with instructions, he went to Poincaré, and Louis' recall was decided upon in principle ; it was only delayed a few months in consequence of a Press indiscretion. At the same time Poincaré was preparing for his accession to the Elysée, and Isvolsky was hoping for his success. " If he is not elected," he wrote on the 16th of January, 1913, " it will be disastrous for us." And on the 29th, after the election : " Poincaré has assured me that in his new capacity he will have every opportunity of directly influencing France's foreign policy." As a matter of fact, after that date, the policy the Premier had directed for the past year was carried on still more actively under the impulse given to it by the President of the Republic. On the one hand, he was more sure of having time before him in which to accomplish his work ; on the other, he felt free to act without anxiety, sheltered by the fiction of constitutional irresponsibility.[1] Finally the nature of his election, which was won by the casting vote of the Royalists and was tantamount to a Nationalist victory, in itself contributed to urge him forward on the path he had opened up.

[1] It will be seen how carefully Poincaré took refuge behind the constitution, notably in his controversy with Renauld, and his statements will be compared with those in which Ribot shows us, in his memoirs, what his real influence was. Poincaré pleaded that he was at sea, from the 26th to the 29th of July, 1914, and inaccurately informed—as though he had not fixed the French policy in advance, before he left for Petersburg. He represented Louis's recall by Jonnart, signed on the only day when he was no longer Premier, and had not yet become President of the Republic,

Ambitious Democrats.

In democratic societies the whole art of ambitious spirits is to begin by creating the popular sentiments whose dictates they will then have to follow. They must endeavour to conceal their true aims, even when these are realized, for sincerity would put an end to the vague unanimity on which their success depends; they must rather try to countenance the abundant misconceptions in the interpretation of history by the nation, which engender hatred and patriotic docility. They must appear "not to intend doing the great things they do". All their actions are consequently tainted with hypocrisy, but in return they may some day have the lively secret satisfaction of seeing a whole people unconsciously carrying out their will, which has been transmitted to them under a suitable disguise while leaving them to believe they are free.

That was Poincaré's position. He had a fixed policy, but he had to reckon with a moderate Parliament and with the pacifist feeling among the masses. *He had to rely on mistakes made by the enemy. During the critical period he had to delegate the rôles of menace and aggression to the ally and keep those of defence and loyalty for himself; he even had to caution Russia against being too provocative, lest this should lead to the alliance being questioned in Paris. His diplomatic success, the neutrality and the co-operation he hoped for when the time came for an appeal to arms, also depended on these conditions.* To gain these objects, he knew how to make waiting for the favourable moment look like moderation, and when he talked of his pacifism it showed all the more plainly how clever he was.

Limits to Policy of Closer Alliance.

These were the standards which regulated his policy, which did not always favour war, as that of a less skilful statesman might have done. On the eve of the Balkan

as having been the Minister's own decision, but we know from Isvolsky that the latter never took any important step without consulting him, and that, moreover, the question had already been settled in principle before the Presidential election.

war, and after it began, Poincaré adopted the rôle of peace-maker, and seemed to be trying to avert it by international collaboration. Yet, when Austria suggested, on the 14th of August, dual steps being taken with regard to the Balkan States and Turkey in order to prevent the impending war, he allowed Sazonov, with whom he happened to be, to decline the first part of these proposals,[1] and in October he again, after some hesitation, supported the view of the Russian Minister, who rejected the idea of an immediate conference and wished the Powers only to intervene after the preliminary battles. This being decided upon, there was no further difficulty in threatening the Balkan States with a refusal of any territorial aggrandizement, for there was not the slightest intention of adhering to the veto when once a victory had provided the pretext of *force majeure*. Had not Russia previously sanctioned the partition of Macedonia her protégés were going to effect, in the Balkan treaty of alliance? Poincaré's proposal that the Powers should make a joint declaration was merely a means of tying Austria's hands whilst States won victories and were fortified by conquests, who would thereby become more efficient allies for the Triple Entente when the time came for the decisive struggle. Moreover, he came to an understanding with Sazonov to save the latter from having to make too definite a declaration of territorial *désintéressement*.

Sometimes an expression of French public opinion on one or other of the subjects publicly discussed obliged the President to adopt a more moderate attitude than that of Russia—notably in 1913, with regard to the assignment of Adrianople and Kavala. At other times the necessity of maintaining the Triple Entente was his chief preoccupation. In December 1912 he suggested a joint naval demonstration to prevent the Bulgarians from entering Constantinople, an event which would have led to immediate intervention on the part of Russia, and perhaps to a rupture between Russia and England.[2] In January 1913

[1] *Vide* Yellow Book on Balkan Affairs.

[2] In case of a Russian occupation of the Bosphorus, Grey had decided to propose the Turkish capital being internationalized, which would have been unacceptable to Russia.

he dissuaded Russia, through the medium of Jonnart, from carrying out the military demonstration she was preparing on the frontiers of Armenia, on the ground that it would "imperil the Anglo-Russian agreement".[1] Finally, he wanted security that Italy would carry out her 1902 agreement of neutrality. He began by adopting a firm attitude with regard to the Albanian question. In explaining to Tittoni the Russian point of view, which favoured Serbia's having access to the Adriatic coast, he added that "if the Austro-Serbian dispute led to a general war, Russia could absolutely rely on French support". But the Italian Ambassador replied that, as regards this question, Italy was bound to Austria by a prior agreement and would stand by her ally. Poincaré then beat a retreat. He was "very much impressed", Isvolsky said, and wished Sazonov had asked "whether he thought it necessary to insist on Serbia's having territorial access to the Adriatic".[2] *In short, Poincaré tried his luck whenever there was an international controversy. If the atmosphere was not propitious, he waited for a better opportunity; if he saw a prospect of allies and a favourable current of opinion, he adopted an inflexible line of policy, and told Russia that if Germany did not agree to it the machinery of the alliance would be brought into play at once.*

Moral Preparation.

At the same time he took advantage of the delay that seemed advisable, to accomplish the task he had set himself of carrying on propaganda. Directly he was elected he spoke to Isvolsky of the "necessity of preparing public opinion for a Balkan conflict". And in 1913 and 1914 there were successive significant indications of what was going on: Delcassé being sent as Ambassador to Petersburg, with a personal letter from Poincaré to the Tsar, making it plain that his principal mission would be to give his attention to Franco-Russian co-operation in the east[3] and the con-

[1] January 24th, Yellow Book on Balkan Affairs, No. 78.

[2] *Livre Noir*, Isvolsky to Sazonov, the 20th of November, 1912.

[3] Delcassé, as we know from a telegram sent by Isvolsky on the 13th of October, 1914, also explained France's "war aims" to Petersburg. No trace of these negotiations remains in the official documents. It is one of the points which still has to be elucidated.

struction of strategic railways; official speeches in which equivocal language was marked by a provocative tone;[1] articles in the newspapers extolling the Russian army to the skies. *Finally, the idea of a menace to our security was turned to daily account to justify a policy whose first consequence would be to create an analogous feeling on the enemy side; there was nothing more to be done but await the manifestations of it, which would in their turn be the starting point for a fresh Nationalist bid. This is how the great silent and pacific masses on both sides can be led, nothing being capable of rousing them from their apathy but having the spectre of invasion held up before them.*

This atmosphere of intensive propaganda rallied a large section of public opinion round the Government—but it had no knowledge of what their foreign policy really was. The rash course embarked upon in 1912 was afterwards pursued by the successive Cabinets—but they worked under the control and authority of Poincaré. They found, on coming into power, that the alliance had been conducted on certain lines which he strongly advised should be maintained, and they carried on the traditions of his Ministry, although there is every reason to believe that many of them would equally willingly have pursued a different policy.[2] In the case of the President himself, the driving force was chiefly the hope of victory, and this hope was based on foreign countries. Poincaré believed in the recovery of the Russian army, and, above all, was confident that France was sure of armed help from England if she complied with certain formalities.

Three Successive Phases of British Foreign Policy.

During the period under review we can fairly clearly distinguish three successive foreign policies pursued by England. From 1897, when Germany began the construction of her "Grand Fleet", until 1903 the British Government contemplated neutralizing this budding rivalry

[1] "France does not want war, but does not fear it."

[2] Bienvenu-Martin's attitude in 1914 will be remembered. Caillaux, who was a member of Doumergue's Cabinet, resigned four months before the war.

by an alliance. Then, the plan having failed, they began to consider how to get the better of their rival. Now if Germany seemed likely to be formidable in the future, on account of her ambitious schemes, she at least seemed an easy prey at the moment; hence the natural temptation to nip her ambitions in the bud. Lee [1] and Fisher,[2] whose sayings have so often been quoted in Berlin, even went so far as to suggest the idea of a preventive naval war; but exaggerated statements of this kind ought not to have been considered a faithful representation of the views of the British Government, who probably never contemplated direct and forcible aggression. *But these latent tendencies none the less influenced the Government's foreign policy to some extent, just as in the case of an individual some vague impulse he will hardly venture to admit, even to himself, will direct his action, his conscience meanwhile remaining untroubled. Though the King's responsible Government could not attack an enemy without any pretext, they could at least increase or diminish the chances of conflict by their attitude.*

Since the 1905 crisis opinion had been gaining ground in Europe that Delcassé's policy was not exclusively national, and that France had been egged on by her ally in the whole Moroccan affair. This was the impression made, in particular, on Moltke, who noted it in his diary, and certain proposals made by Rouvier lend some colour to the view. Anyhow, we know from Eckhardstein that, during this critical period, King Edward was definitely in favour of Delcassé being kept in power. In 1909 the British Government made a great point of offering France help which was perhaps not indispensable. In 1911 they first showed a tendency to restrict, rather than increase, their ally's liberty of action. At the beginning of the crisis, before the Cabinet meeting which prescribed the adoption of a more moderate

[1] Mr. A. H. Lee, M.P., Civil Lord of the Admiralty, speaking at the annual dinner in connection with Eastleigh Station Staff on the 2nd of February, 1905, said they believed in the old saying, "Thrice blessed is he who gets his blow in first, and he hoped in the event of any danger that the British Navy would be in a position to deal its blow—and a heavy one—first, before the other Power might even become aware that war was declared" (*Eastleigh Weekly News*, the 3rd of February, 1905 [Tr.]).

[2] In a private letter he advised King Edward VII. to "Copenhagen the German Fleet in the Kiel Canal".

attitude, the Foreign Office had advised a French ship being sent to the Moroccan coast—a step which, as we have seen, might have led to war, although that was not Germany's wish. And, until the end, the British Government insisted that they could not agree to the cession of a port, or even of economic privileges, to Germany.

Hence it will be seen that during the whole of this period of indisputable superiority, England was inclined to favour the bellicose elements in Europe, as was Germany, for the same reasons, in 1914. *But just at the moment when war finally broke out, England had ceased to be inspired by these motives.* The German Fleet had become a formidable organization, the advantage of attacking it was no longer so evident from the naval point of view; the contest between the Powers had been transferred to the Balkans, and England was less interested in it; lastly, a militant Government was in power in France, and required to be held in check rather than egged on. For all these reasons England's influence was exerted in the direction of conciliation from 1912 onwards. *Whilst the British Government may be said to have "gone ahead" of the French Government, rather than otherwise, in* 1905 *and* 1911, *they distinctly "lagged behind" in* 1914. *But, at the moment when they tried at least to delay the outbreak of war, the material and moral obligations they had incurred made it more and more impossible for them to avoid being drawn into it.*

Domestic and Foreign Policy. Necessary Hypocrisy.

Ever since 1906, the heads of the Liberal Government had quite understood that the Triple Entente policy they were bent on pursuing must be carried on in case of war; at the same time they felt they ought not to admit that this policy must inevitably lead to England's intervention. Paradoxically enough, attacks from the Opposition were a source of less anxiety to them than the divisions within the Government, and the choice of alliances troubled them less than the difficulty in making their consequences clear to public opinion. In fact, whilst there was no serious difference of opinion between Liberals and Conservatives

with regard to the general direction of foreign policy, Grey, Bonar Law, and Curzon, being agreed as to the advisability of maintaining and even drawing the bonds of the Entente closer, the Cabinet itself was divided. It contained a "Liberal Imperialist" wing and a "Radical Pacifist" wing, the difference between the two being publicly shown by the resignations of Morley and Burns the day war was declared. It was very difficult to pursue a strong policy under such conditions. On the other hand, an important section of public opinion remained faithful to the old idea of "splendid isolation", and would not allow the country to be bound by troublesome engagements which would put it at the mercy of the first European crisis.

Grey had to steer between these dangers. He organized the Anglo-French coalition, fully appreciating the consequences, but without putting the question plainly before the Cabinet or before the public. The electoral campaign of 1906 provided him with the necessary pretext for entering into military conversations with France, without the consent of the Cabinet, after merely consulting Asquith and two other colleagues who shared his views. The Government as a whole were only informed of the step eighteen months later, after an agreement had been concluded. There had been "a course of confidences, and of secret negotiations, including the disclosure of deep military secrets".[1] Yet, even then, Grey tried to conceal the effects of his decision. *Both he and Asquith took every opportunity of asserting that Great Britain was absolutely free; he laid stress on the legal position without facing the actual position; he demonstrated that there was nothing for which he could be blamed, but he omitted to say that there was everything to be feared.* During his eight years of office, he succeeded in continually drawing the bonds of the alliance closer, without ever sacrificing the independence of his country by any written undertaking. *Plans for collaboration were only fixed in the form of hypotheses, official promises were given subject to the trend of British public opinion; whilst the definite assurances France received as to the eventual landing of British troops were only given by officers whose rank and official position guaranteed*

[1] Loreburn, *How War Came*.

their authority, but who could be disavowed by the Government, if the latter wished.

An enemy would say that such an attitude was characterized by duplicity, cunning, and refusal to accept responsibility, and a friend would say that Grey led his country in the path dictated by its honour and interests, without ever violating either its constitution or its traditions. Be that as it may, it is impossible quite to understand the British pre-war policy without first recognizing its ambiguous character and distinguishing between its various plans. On each occasion of a European crisis, the opinion of the Government was spread abroad in different ways, according to its spokesman : the Cabinet gave Germany to understand, through a public speech made by one of its members, that they were not indifferent to the contest, and must be reckoned with ; the Foreign Secretary told the French Ambassador that England's attitude would depend on public opinion, and added that, in this case, he was hopeful with regard to it ; certain Foreign Office officials went still further, and advised France to take up a strong attitude[1] ; finally, the English Staff promised armed help in case of German aggression, and drew up the plans. It will be seen that this was the line of action England adopted during all the Moroccan crises. In short, in the matter of intervention, the British Government would not commit themselves. But although this enabled them to retain the confidence of the nation, it did not really insure England's having a free hand.

England Bound by the Entente Cordiale.

By the mere fact of forming an alliance with a continental Power, Great Britain embarked on a course along which she was irresistibly impelled, as Lord Loreburn clearly shows in his book *How War Came*, for this in itself made it possible to injure her indirectly, to defeat her in the person of her ally, to oblige her either to intervene or be faithless. Moreover, the world had understood this ; there was no need for a rigid formula to bring home to other countries the

[1] *Vide* Caillaux trial.

importance of the Entente Cordiale ; the contrast between this and a long tradition of isolation had been duly noted. Besides, *the Franco-German relations were so strained that the alliance of a third Power with the one must necessarily turn to hostility against the other. It could also be foreseen that the British Government would not be free to choose the moment for the conflict, for the naval ally would be drawn into it by the continental ally.* The truth is that, owing to its indefinite nature, the Entente did not give England any right to control the French policy ; it merely gave the latter increased chances of victory without enabling the former to exert any effective influence in the direction of peace. And was not the British Government, the instigator of the Entente, bound, in spite of itself, to the Nationalist elements of French opinion, whose liking for England was only in proportion to their hatred of Germany ?

The Diplomatic Agreements.

It is only necessary to examine England's diplomatic agreements to see how much her fate was, in reality, bound up with that of France. The agreement of 1904 had been the basis of a common policy in Morocco, and it virtually insured the solidarity of the two countries in case of the conflict arising in this connection. The agreement of 1912 prepared the way for concerted action on a wider basis ; coming at a moment when the question of Morocco was settled, and the agreement of 1904 consequently no longer applied, *it meant in fact that Franco-British solidarity would now be extended to all the other problems in which the Entente might have common interests.* On the other hand, the Anglo-German *pourparlers* of 1912 had helped to define the British Government's "war position". London had proposed undertaking not to support any plan of aggression against Germany, but had refused to promise neutrality in case Germany felt obliged to declare war, on the ground of provocation.[1] By this, England made it clear that she would not take any part in preparing an offensive against Germany, but that if war should break out, through what

[1] *Vide* Bethmann-Hollweg, Tirpitz, and Haldane's memoirs.

was done by another nation, she contemplated taking part in it. *Those who wished to do so could construe this into advice to do as they liked, provided England knew nothing about it.*

The Technical Agreements.

Moreover, the technical supplements to the Entente defined this attitude clearly. The cautious correspondence between Grey and Cambon was backed up by military conversations which decided on the possible methods of intervention, by a diplomatic intimacy which prepared the way for it, and by a redistribution of the Fleets which anticipated it. The moment the decision was taken, everything would be found in readiness; it would be announced to officers who were accustomed to live in expectation of it, ardently desirous, Winston Churchill tells us, of intervening on the side of France, and inclined to over-estimate the strength of their army. What an irresistible temptation to employ an instrument so carefully prepared under such favourable conditions! What an injustice if, after having induced France to leave her coasts unguarded, they were not to be protected! What a condemnation of all the work done, if the machinery prepared were not set in motion when the case to which it applied arose!

Determinism of the Entente.

The general effect of these circumstances had given the text of the agreement a fresh character. Everything said now sounded like an allusion to a much more binding undertaking which was not amongst the archives. The many negotiations had brought about a quasi-necessity for intervention on the part of England which Lloyd George, when interrogated in the House of Commons in 1918, described first as the effect of a pact, and then, on reflection, as an obligation of honour. No doubt this undefined obligation was capable of being differently interpreted, and might be more or less strongly felt. It was in any case particularly strong for Grey, who had negotiated the agreement and put his name to it, and was still to be in power

in 1914. Possibly some members of the Government may have imagined that they could still hold back at the last moment, if the country was not ripe or the occasion favourable. *But France and Russia knew that England had embarked on a course which led from a diplomatic hypothesis to conversation between experts, from this conversation to a conditional agreement, from this agreement to an alteration in the naval dispositions, from the redistribution of the Fleets to their collaboration in case of a naval war, and finally from naval solidarity to military solidarity.*

In June 1912 (before the Grey-Cambon correspondence), Poincaré told Isvolsky that there was no reason for wishing the Entente to become an alliance, recent events having proved that, in the present position of Europe, the community of interests between France and England, and the consequent understanding, were so great and unquestionable that this in itself sufficiently guaranteed unanimity between the two States as regards their policy in case of serious complications, no matter what they might be.[1]

General Wilson's Promise.

But what was more, the French Government had received a formal promise. In his report on Poincaré's visit to Petersburg, in August 1912, Sazonov remarked that, according to the latter, the result of the conversations between the military experts had been the conclusion of a verbal agreement which bound England to come to France's assistance in case of a German attack, and to send 100,000 men to the Belgian frontier, to guard against an invasion " which the French General Staff expected " ; and the following month, in a report on his visit to Balmoral, he said he had received confirmation of Poincaré's information from Grey. Comparison of the successive plans of the French General Staff enables the exact moment to be determined when English assistance was taken into account in our military forecasts. It was not anticipated in Plan 16, but *Plan 16a makes allowance for the presence of an English army on our left wing.* Messimy explained this to the Briey

[1] *Livre Noir*, letter from Isvolsky, the 6th of June, 1912.

Committee of Inquiry. He said: "Our conversations with General Wilson, representing the British General Staff, at the time of the Agadir affair, led us to feel confident that England would intervene in case of a conflict."

Belgian Neutrality.

If, however, England should hesitate to keep the word of her Generals, it was also known in France that Belgian neutrality would be violated, and that this would decide her to do so. Preparations to defend Belgium had been made in advance, as we now know from the official reports of the Anglo-Belgian negotiations. The representative of the English General Staff had promised to supply 100,000 men, but provided for their being landed in France, because, he said, landing them at Antwerp would take much longer. These were the very figures and the same plan that had been mentioned in the Anglo-French conversations. *In reality, violation of Belgium's neutrality seemed so necessarily bound up with an attack on France that no one thought of distinguishing between the two questions.* "It was considered so certain at the War Office," Messimy said, "that all our plans were made on that assumption."[1] Dubail told the Russians the same thing. On the occasion of his visit in 1911 he said, "We must expect a battle between Namur and Metz from the fifteenth to the seventeenth day".[2] In giving evidence before the Briey Committee of Inquiry, Joffre also said he foresaw the violation; General Buat had forecast it in a book, and General Michel, vice-Chairman of the War Council, equally regarded Belgium as the future theatre of operations, and was glad of it, as he thought it the most suitable territory for an offensive.

The English experts shared these opinions: "overwhelming detailed evidence", Winston Churchill wrote, "showed that the Germans had made all the necessary preparations to cross Belgium". True, it was not known whether the Germans would operate on both banks of the Meuse or only on the right bank, and this was the cause

[1] Briey Committee of Inquiry. [2] *Livre Noir.*

of serious mistakes later on, but this, Winston Churchill goes on to say, was "the only part of their plan which could not be foreseen". Consequently the surprise in 1914 was feigned. This attack on people's rights, which was to give our propaganda such a good start, had been anticipated for some years past, and even considered by de Broqueville [1] "quite natural". [2] People were misguided enough to think it might give us a military advantage, and, above all, it was known that it would be the means of bringing in England. The Germans would walk into this trap; confidence was felt that they would be caught in it.

French Confidence.

In fact, if certain people in France were still in doubt as to the value of the promises made by Wilson, or the exact nature of the Schlieffen plan of campaign, that did not prevent their all the same proclaiming their certainty of English co-operation, *for it was the best way of encouraging Russia to take a strong line.* When the following sentence was read, at a meeting of the Briey Committee of Inquiry, from Dubail's report: "I then explained the broad lines of our plan of operations to the Emperor, laying stress on the substantial support of the British army on our left wing", and Barthe remarked: "He could hardly have been so reckless as to make such a promise without having been assured of it", Messimy replied: "Those are arguments one is entitled to employ from the diplomatic point of view".

The Entente and the Balkans.

There was only one doubt in the midst of all this optimism: under certain circumstances, public opinion, which is the final arbiter of English policy, might refuse to sanction intervention. It was consequently necessary for France to avoid any open provocation to Germany, and to endeavour to make out a favourable case, which would enable the Prime Minister, Asquith, to solve this domestic

[1] Belgian War Minister.
[2] Remark made to the German military attaché.

question, the only unknown quantity of the problem. *Now, if the many repercussions of the alliances are carefully considered, they lead to the paradoxical conclusion that nothing but a Balkan conflict, in which, however, neither France nor England would be directly interested, could have brought about a combined Triple Entente offensive.* In 1912 it had become much more difficult to imagine a subject of dispute in the east, the question of Morocco being settled. It was hardly possible to hope for such a windfall as a direct attack or frontier violation. *It was consequently necessary for Germany to be indirectly involved in the quarrel. This was also essential in order to be sure of Russia's co-operation.* The latter, as we have seen, had refused to give France armed support in disputes outside Europe. There was only one way of making sure that she would fight without aggression on the part of Germany, namely, the war being waged in defence of her own interests.

On the other hand, it would not have done for the claim to Constantinople to have appeared too clearly responsible for the conflict, for this would have been risking an Anglo-Russian conflict, even before Austria's hostility was roused or Germany intervened. A purely Balkan quarrel was preferable. There would not be long to wait for it, for the Pan-Slav propaganda was a continual source of provocation to Austria. It would not be difficult to assign the rôle of aggressor to the latter Power, for her military superiority inclined her to reply to the Serbian menace by planning an offensive, or to induce Russia to intervene as a defender of Right, for the distinction between the sovereignties still fairly well disguised the complete subordination of Belgrade to Petersburg in all that concerned relations with Austria, or to make France, who would be drawn in after Germany, appear her victim. Was it not also the special interest of the Russian Government? Their only chance of inducing England to recognize their right to Constantinople was to formulate it after the outbreak of a war waged in common for another cause, at a moment when anxiety for victory was the chief concern and made the most painful concessions easy between allies.[1]

[1] This is, in fact, what happened in 1915.

Here, then, we have the whole Triple Entente interested in Balkan crises. This was something new, and it brought about an analogous change in the policy of the enemy group, whose alliance was correspondingly firmly cemented, its centre of gravity being similarly shifted to the east.

Austro-German Relations until the End of 1913.

Beneath an official appearance of unity, Austro-German relations had been rather strained during the period between 1907 and 1912. We have already had occasion to refer to Austria's independent attitude with regard to Moroccan questions. It should be added that in 1908 the German Government had not been informed of the date fixed for the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, that they had resented this, and had taken an opportunity of saying so; German intervention in the crisis was represented and interpreted as an act of solidarity, but, in reality, it followed Russia's decision to stand aloof, and was only brag, the main object being to transfer the credit for the victory from Austria to Germany.[1] On the other hand, Bismarck's successors had not forgotten the grim warning given by the old Chancellor, who said before his death that "the day when the bridges were broken down between Berlin and Petersburg, Germany would become dependent on Austria, and would have to impoverish herself for the sake of Austrian interests". This is what Sazonov said on returning from his interview with Bethmann-Hollweg at Potsdam: "He told me on his own initiative that if Austria did not remain faithful to the principles enunciated by Aehrenthal, and showed a disposition to aggression in the Balkans, her ally was not bound by any treaty to support her, and would not do so, as it would be against Germany's own interests." These assurances were repeated by the Kaiser to the Tsar at Port Baltic a few months later. At the same time, *the German Government offered to act as mediator in case of differences between Austria and Russia.*

This conciliatory attitude was maintained during the

[1] If a version given by Wickham Steed (*The Hapsburg Monarchy*) is to be believed, this step was even taken at Russia's request.

Balkan wars. So long as Russia's enfeebled condition made war out of the question, Germany could shower assurances of solidarity on her ally without any risk ; but when things became serious, she made conditions. In November 1912 an Austrian Party, adherents of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, declared themselves in favour of intervention in the Balkan war. The Heir Apparent went to sound the Kaiser ; on his return to Vienna, he said that William II. did not approve of the idea, and that peace must be maintained. About the same time, the German Emperor sent a telegram to his Chancellor, in which he reminded him of the terms of the treaty of alliance : it was formed with a view to Russian aggression, and could not be brought into play for the sake of Austrian " caprices " ; and the Emperor did not consider that any of the subjects under discussion at the moment were serious enough to determine a *casus fœderis*.[1] Again, in January 1913, Szápáry, on returning from Berlin, told the authorities in Vienna that the Kaiser and Bethmann-Hollweg wanted to avoid war.[2] At the beginning of February, when there was a risk of the Austrian military preparations bringing about dangerous tension with Russia, Moltke wrote to Hötzendorf to explain that Berlin was anxious for Austria to demobilize as soon as possible. A little later, when the question of who was to have Durazzo threatened to create fresh trouble in Europe, the Kaiser went to call on the Austrian Ambassador, and told him that the German people would not understand war being declared on such a pretext.

At the London Conference, Germany acted with England throughout, in endeavouring to maintain peace, and obtained a series of concessions from Austria. Again in July, when Berchtold talked to Tschirschky about a plan of military intervention in Serbia, in case of the latter attempting to make further important territorial acquisitions at Bulgaria's expense, the German Ambassador was instructed to oppose hasty or isolated action of any kind, and to dissuade the Vienna Government from taking up a hard-and-fast position with regard to Monastir as they

[1] Helfferich, *Entstehung des Weltkriegs* ; Czernin's memoirs.
[2] Hötzendorf, loc. cit.

had done with regard to Durazzo.[1] Therefore Austria abandoned the idea, and it was in vain that Hötzendorf advised Francis Ferdinand not to be influenced any longer by the Kaiser, "who has already left us in the lurch twice". Further, Germany pursued quite a different policy from Austria in a number of questions in dispute: during the whole of the second Balkan war, whilst the Ballplatz supported the Bulgarian cause, the Wilhelmstrasse favoured Greece and Rumania against Bulgaria.

The existence of these Inter-allied difficulties, of which we had been informed by our representatives in Belgrade and Petersburg, was admitted by Berchtold at the Ministerial Council of the 3rd of October, 1913, when he said that differences of opinion had arisen between Vienna and Berlin, and objected, when Hötzendorf proposed immediate action being taken against Serbia, that their allies would find fault with that.[2] *In short, during the whole of this period, German influence over Austria was invariably exerted not only in the general interest of the Triple Alliance, but also in favour of peace. This was not quite the way in which the Franco-Russian Alliance was conducted at the same time, as we have seen.*

But towards the end of the year 1913, *there was a marked change in Berlin,* due to the fact that, whilst steady progress had been made in consolidating the Triple Entente, the Triple Alliance had shown a disquieting tendency to break up, and Germany began to think that steps must be taken to guard against this danger.

Italy and the Triple Alliance.

Italy had never belonged heart and soul to the Triple Alliance, but had rather looked upon it as a means of satisfying her ambitions. Each time it had been renewed she had put a higher price on her adherence:[3] in 1882 she exacted a promise of defence in case of French aggression; in 1887, she was promised Germany's co-operation in her offensive projects, and association with

[1] Montgelas, loc. cit.
[2] Yellow Book on Balkan Affairs. Hötzendorf, loc. cit.
[3] Pribram, *The Secret Treaties of Austria-Hungary.*

Austria in the Balkans ; in 1896, the alliance was extended to the question of Tunis ; and in 1902, she renewed it in return for the promise of an advantageous commercial treaty. On the other hand, she took more and more trouble to detract from the impression of hostility her pledges of fidelity to the Triple Alliance might make on the other Powers, by stipulating, in the Treaty of 1882, that it would not take effect in any case against England, by having a protocol added to the 1891 treaty, which bound the contracting parties to ask for the support of the latter Power, and by announcing in 1896 that she would not consent to take part in a war against a France allied with England.

From the first, her attitude showed plainly that directly the Entente Cordiale was formed, Italy would glide gently into its orbit ; and, in fact, whilst it was being prepared in Paris and London, Italy pledged herself, by a treaty of indefinite duration, not to attack the Entente in any circumstances. Finally, in 1909, at Racconnigi, she shaped her eastern policy in accordance with that of Russia. From that time, Italy only belonged nominally to the Triple Alliance.[1] She retained its advantageous label, and benefited by it ; she continued to promise a co-operation which appeared to have increased value in proportion as it became more doubtful ; she still shared the advantages of the association, but no longer shared its obligations. *Poincaré and Sazonov only looked upon her as a " restraining element ", a " dead weight " in the enemy machine.*[2] Her partnership in the Triple Alliance insured the maintenance of a balance of power within it, as a result of mutual concessions which neutralized ambitions that could only be satisfied at the expense of the Triple Entente. Article 7 of the Triple Alliance, in particular, which gave Italy the right to exact compensation if Austria should extend her sway in the Balkans, inclined the latter to prefer not doing so, and exposed her, if she attempted to evade the pact, to the menace of a hostile ally, quite ready to hold her to it.

[1] An exception was made as regards the common interests of Austria and Italy in Albania.

[2] *Livre Noir.*

On the other hand, Italy could be employed by the Triple Entente as a spy on the Triple Alliance, and this made it even an advantage to her new friends that she should remain in the enemy camp. For long past, shrewd politicians in Germany had not cherished many illusions as to the sincerity of the Italian promises. If they still hoped the Government in Rome would co-operate with them, they were counting less on the terms of the alliance to determine this than on the first victory with which they expected to begin the war. In spite of this, the Kaiser persisted in believing in Victor Emmanuel's loyalty, and the General Staff in reckoning on Italian co-operation in their plans of campaign. This unwarranted hope, combined with this anxiety, was another weak point in Germany's preparations.

German Dependence on Austria.

Anyhow, Italy's hesitating attitude in the various European crises created conditions which gave Austria a hold on Germany that Sazonov pointed out in reporting to the Tsar on his visit to England, in 1913. The time had gone by when Bülow, contemplating the possibility of Germany's being completely isolated, said that " it would not be so very terrible ". When this possibility threatened to become a reality, the progress that had been made by her adversaries towards solidarity gave it a far more serious aspect. *The conclusion of military agreements between the Triple Entente Powers bound Germany to Austria's Balkan policy, just as the Franco-Russian rapprochement had bound her to Italy's Mediterranean policy in* 1891*: the tendency of alliances is always to emulate one another. For Germany, alliance with Austria was now the only alternative to alarming solitude.* Now after her experience during the Moroccan crises, she no longer expected that Austria would stand by her in a war against France or England.[1] *It was consequently*

[1] Aehrenthal had explained to the Delegations, on the 12th of February, 1908, that the Triple Alliance " had nothing to do with naval adventures " (he mentioned German interests in the Baltic or the North Sea as an instance), and a few months later that it had equally no interest in African affairs.

necessary to make sure of her co-operation in the east. Germany's evolution was analogous to that of France; the tendency of both Powers was to transfer their feud to the Balkans, to make more sure of victory.

Hence we find Austria's position transformed: Germany's shaken position gave her an authority in the Triple Alliance she had never had before. It could no longer be said with truth, as has so often been said, in order to strengthen the case against Germany, that Austria was at her beck and call. In July 1914, Jagow invariably fell back on the nightmare of prospective isolation, "if Germany did not stand loyally by Austria", in reply to the objections Lichnowsky urged.[1] And about the same time, when there was some doubt in Vienna as to the intentions of the Berlin Government, did not Hötzendorf actually say to Hohenlohe: "If Germany is so unreliable, we must consider whether we ought not to break off the alliance".[2]

The Austrian Government and Opinion in Vienna.

What then was the feeling in Vienna at this critical moment? Public opinion had been almost entirely apathetic for some decades past. Foreign policy had been looked upon as the special province of a few experts. The press was under official control, compelled to choose between being inspired or confiscated. The public sometimes applauded successes, "as they would a good opera". This indifference was now tempered by depression. Aehrenthal and Berchtold had accustomed the country to costly and useless mobilizations, diplomatic tension, Stock Exchange panics, and agitations which led to nothing. Something in the nature of action was demanded; war seemed preferable to delay: there was a belief that this alone could be of any use to the Monarchy.

Who were the leaders to guide this feeble body of opinion, to stem this current of pessimism? A Government in the

[1] The change in German policy had been facilitated by the death of Kiderlen, who, Jules Cambon told us, "had a sort of personal antipathy to Austria, and who was at heart rather inclined to side with the Triple Entente, without admitting it". (Yellow Book on the Balkans.)

[2] Hötzendorf, loc. cit.

habit of resorting to the most dubious manœuvres to further their plans, and as shortsighted as they were unscrupulous. A Foreign Minister who had believed successively in Russia's gaining a victory over Japan, then, after her defeat, in her indefinite exhaustion ; in the Balkan States being pacifically inclined in 1912, then, war having been declared, in a Turkish victory, and finally, Turkey having been defeated, in a Bulgarian victory. Since January 1912, a Berchtold had been at the helm, a *grand seigneur* sportsman, thrust into power against his will, interrupted in his amusements by affairs of State, who went to the theatre every night and had flowers showered upon him, like a singer, who talked racing when diplomacy was discussed, and hesitated as much between the different policies proposed to him as between the coats displayed every morning in his study for him to choose from.[1] In February 1913, he wrote to Hötzendorf that any military action against Serbia would inevitably lead to Russian intervention, and he enclosed a memorandum on the danger of war between Great Powers, pointing out that it would involve emancipation of the foreign nationalities in Russia, and consequently, in Austria-Hungary as well. On the other hand, in April, he spoke in favour of an attack on Serbia, in case of Bulgaria being defeated, and said that, in case of need, they would "let it come to" war with Russia. In September, he no longer even believed in the probability of Russian intervention. His impressions and opinions were a series of contradictions, his endless vacillation that of a man who wants war and fears it. He tried to put an end to his doubts by consulting Hötzendorf.

Hötzendorf.

The very simplicity and directness of Hötzendorf's ideas commanded respect, amidst such puppets ; of those responsible for the war, he was the only one who had the courage openly to admit that he had wished for it. He held the same fixed opinion throughout his whole life, and he expressed it again remorselessly in the memoirs he published

[1] Kanner, *Katastrophenpolitik*. Recouly, loc. cit.

in 1921. To him, the maintenance of the *status quo* was only a chimera : a nation, he said, must either go uphill or downhill. He believed that war with Serbia was inevitable, and wanted it to take place as soon as possible, because Austria's chances of victory diminished as time went on ; they were less in 1914 than in 1913, and in 1913 than in 1909. He was Chief of the General Staff till November 1911, was retired from this post by Aehrenthal, but re-appointed after the death of the latter in January 1913, and from that time onwards the bellicose tendency in Government circles gradually increased.

The Austro-Russian Conflict.

Everyone now felt that Austria and Russia were already virtually at war. After the Balkan States' victory, the latter had been unable to compel her two protégés to accept her arbitration in their dispute, in accordance with the terms of the Treaty, and, the alliance between them having come to an end, she sided very definitely with Serbia, as being a more reliable ally against Austria, and a less dangerous rival for possession of the Straits. In February 1914, Sazonov said to Pashitch, in Petersburg : " We will do everything in our power for the Serbian people " ; and the Tsar welcomed the idea of a marriage between the Prince Regent and one of his daughters. " She will be Empress of the Jugo-Slavs ", the Serbian Minister exclaimed.[1] Thus the Slav League, being dissolved, resumed its anti-Austrian origin. At the same time, the Russian Government endeavoured to counteract the influence of the Triple Alliance in Bucharest : a visit paid by the Tsar and Sazonov, in June, indicated the change in Rumania's policy. As a counter-blast to this, efforts were made to negotiate a *rapprochement* between Austria and Bulgaria, in pursuance of the plan of action we find outlined in the memorandum sent to Berlin on the 3rd of July, 1914.

The question was whether this conflict could remain purely diplomatic ? It seems that there were not many illusions with regard to this either in Russia or Austria. The Tsar talked

[1] White Book of 1919.

to Buchanan in Petersburg about the approaching dissolution of Austria-Hungary, allowing him to remark that it must necessarily be preceded by a war,[1] whilst in Vienna, as far back as at the Ministerial Council of October 1913, Berchtold explained that the situation was serious, that the Balkan *bloc* might be reformed against Austria, that Russia had only postponed the day of reckoning, that French capital was working against the Triple Alliance in the Balkans, and the conclusion he reached was that the Austrian armaments must be reinforced. Tisza, in reply, emphasized the necessity for adopting a firm attitude, Bilinsky said that war was inevitable, Stürgkh was of opinion that it was a "vital matter" for Austria to humiliate Serbia, and Hötzendorf was "very glad to find a pacific solution regarded as out of the question by such competent authorities". Francis Joseph himself, who had so often held the advocates of war in check (notably in 1908, and in February and October 1913), said to Czernin: "The Bucharest Peace cannot last. We shall have another war. God grant that it may be confined to the Balkans".

These fatalist views favoured Hötzendorf's propaganda. But he himself was far from optimistic. In order to decide the Government, his reports enumerated the fresh dangers which threatened Austria: the increase in Serbia's power as a result of her territorial acquisitions, the growth of her spirit of aggression with the increase in the Triple Entente armaments, Italy's disaffection, the possibility of King Carol's death, which would be sufficient to put a definite end to the Austro-Rumanian alliance. Austria, he explained to Francis Joseph, could not prevail over a coalition between Russia, Rumania, and Serbia; she must therefore subdue the most aggressive of the three before too late. Others urged domestic reasons, which were no less imperative: Potiorek, the Governor of Bosnia, said, at the beginning of July 1914, that there was such a strong agitation in the province, that an expedition against Serbia would be the only means of keeping it.

[1] Czernin, loc. cit.

A Policy of Catastrophe.

The pessimism which was consequently felt in Austria determined what Kanner has called the "policy of catastrophe". *There are two sorts of gamblers, he says, those who risk a tolerable situation for the sake of a fortune, and those who want to avert a disaster, and to whom the chance of it seems even less of a risk than the future they foresee.* Austria belonged to the latter class. She did not attempt to "march on Salonica" when that was possible; she had even tied her hands as regards annexation of any kind by her political undertakings, both domestic and foreign. And yet, in 1914, she rushed, in desperation, into an offensive war.

As far back as in 1908, Aehrenthal's inconsistent policy had been inspired by an incipient feeling of anxiety:[1] knowing of the Anglo-Russian conversations at Reval, he seized what he thought the last chance of consolidating Austro-Hungarian power in the Balkans. But for the sake of annexing Bosnia and Herzegovina he gave up the Sandjak, thus abandoning his scheme of a Danube-Adriatic railway, just as he had previously abandoned the policy of Austro-Russian collaboration in Macedonia for the sake of the railway. The position was now more serious, and there was a less able man at the helm. Austria believed, as Hoyos says, that war was her only alternative to revolution.

Nor did Germany risk a war of Imperialism during the forty years when she would have been sure of success. But, under the influence of the feeling in Austria, she too gradually came to believe in the inevitability of war, and the advisability of a preventive war. There were some who, seeing the doors closing everywhere, would have rushed her into war, the possibility of a military victory being, in their eyes, *the only way out*, and the serious matter was that they seemed to have almost won over the Sovereign and the Heir Apparent to their side.

The Emperor William II.

The publication of his letters, marginal notes, and memoirs, has now enabled us to form an accurate estimate

[1] B. Molden, *Graf Aehrenthal.*

of the character of William II. Rathenau [1] gave the best description of the unreal atmosphere surrounding almost all sovereigns, and in which he lived: he represented a world divided into people and kings, the latter constituting a large international family of "over-lords" who exchanged presents and combined to defeat horrible revolution; the mind accustomed to hasty generalizations and sumptuous imagery, the horror of realities, the prolongation of nursery conditions all through life; the idea of being related to God Himself, the inextricable mixture of religion and politics, the conception of history as a series of inspired decisions, heaven being pictured in the image of the throne; all moral values endangered by action, and all errors thus aggravated; the subconscious forces deadened by a life of display.

In the case of William II., these characteristics, bound up with his position, were accentuated by special circumstances, which are described by those who knew him intimately; a coalition of courtiers, the Crown Prince [2] tells us, kept all bad news from him, prepared satisfactory Press abstracts, and discouraged honest visitors, or prevented their speaking. The Kaiser, Czerin says,[3] at last fled from the truth like a pestilence: he had not been vaccinated, and would succumb to it. His life and thoughts assumed an artificial character which is evinced even in the way he writes: he constantly confuses symbols with realities, speaking, for instance, in a letter to the Tsar, of "standards and soldiers praying together". The veil which separated him from the world was only torn aside twice: in 1904, when Bülow refused to ratify the treaty of Björkö, which the monarch considered a triumph, and sent in his resignation, whilst Nicholas II. prepared to abjure his promise; and in 1908, when, in consequence of the publication of his *Daily Telegraph* interview, he found he was condemned by the Reichstag and abandoned by his Chancellor (at that time, the Crown Prince tells us, he was deeply wounded, fell ill, and thought of abdicating).

In spite of these disillusionments, his frame of mind

[1] Rathenau, *Der Kaiser*.
[2] The Crown Prince's Memoirs.
[3] Czernin, loc. cit.

remained so Utopian that, in 1914, he could not imagine his Russian and English "cousins" taking part against him. While the war was at its height, he expounded the plan of an alliance with France against England to Erzberger. Writing in exile, he showed himself incapable of understanding pre-war history, even after so long, and with all his experience; his accounts of diplomatic negotiations are grossly distorted, personal and futile details are put on a level with events of the utmost importance, and his justification of Germany's policy is far less convincing than one that an impartial historian might have produced.

Other failings which his father, Frederick III. had been discerning enough to note, and had commented on in a letter to Bismarck [1] as far back as in 1886, were inseparable from his peculiar temperament. His chief characteristic was a nervous excitability of which all his biographers give instances: the foolish loquacity which gave him away to his interlocutors; irresistible impulses, both good and bad; an anxiety to please, amounting to mania, which led him to adopt a different personality for the benefit of each interlocutor, and transformed him in the same way as a play actor; an ardent desire to be understood and liked, which made him ridiculously touchy; alternations of enthusiasm and depression whose successive effects are described by Karl Rosner in his book, *Der König*, and which Czernin tells us accounted for his peace conditions varying from day to day during the war; fear of being dictated to, and a feeling that he must assert himself, common to all weak natures, which led him into the folly of imagining the persecution enlarged upon in his memoirs, where he depicts himself hunted down by his enemies,[2] martyrized by his Chancellors, and yet overflowing with kindness and courtesy.

This psychological obliquity impaired the monarch's best qualities. The goodwill recognized alike by Rathenau, Czernin, Haldane, and Cambon, without distinction of party or nation, was manifested, in the way he exaggerated

[1] Bismarck's *Reflections and Reminiscences*.

[2] He went so far as to believe in July 1914 that a portion of the English Fleet had orders to take him prisoner, when he was on the Norwegian coast.

everything he did, by shaking hands "with unnatural heartiness",[1] sending sensational telegrams, making efforts to attract which were almost in the nature of an offensive, tactless pleasantries amounting to servility (Witte describes the young Prince, dazzled by the Tsar's majesty, behaving like a lackey) or insolence (as when he thanked Austria, after the Algeciras Conference, for having acted as a "brilliant second"), and giving information which he regarded as a mark of friendship (he was perpetually telling Nicholas II. of supposed English plans of aggression); it had to be rewarded at once, and, if his expectations were not fulfilled, it was transformed into the spite so boorishly expressed in his marginal notes. In short, there was always something wrong with even his most genuine emotions: he was evermore considering their dramatic value, making them an element in a tragedy of the nations which he was producing in spirit, and in which he felt himself at one and the same time an actor and spectator. (On the 30th of July, when he sees that war is inevitable, he pauses for a moment before giving vent to his rage, admires the perfidy of his enemies, and before honest Grey, whom he considers the author of the catastrophe, he utters the "*Qualis artifex*" of a playwright.)[2]

His Policy.

The personal part taken by the Emperor in the politics of his country has often been exaggerated. Undoubtedly, his loud manifestations made a good deal of noise in Europe, and aggravated difficult situations. But, if we consider what he did rather than what he said, we shall see that in the majority of cases of importance, William II. really was, as Schoen says, a strictly constitutional sovereign. Only the constitution itself made it incumbent on him to decide between peace and war, in the last resort, and, on the other hand, divisions within his Government gave him the rôle of arbiter. For this reason it is essential to show how his ideas gradually changed. The process, moreover, partly reflected the evolution that was taking place through-

[1] Laforgue, Berlin. [2] German Documents.

out the Empire. The people's living aspirations contended against one another in the monarch's mind, where they took the form of arguments. And was not his downfall due to a conflict between an "American" tendency, and a "feudal" tendency which was the antithesis itself of modern Germany?

To tell the truth, it is difficult enough to discover any principle amidst his contradictory pronouncements, and there was hardly any idea that he did not take up for a time. *Yet he certainly seems to have had one great dream: that of a continental alliance, directed against England and Japan.* He first tried to realize this idea by simultaneously exerting his personal influence over the Tsar, and starting a policy of conciliation towards France.[1] He carried on an active correspondence with Nicholas II., and gained such a hold over him that poor Nicky, afraid of his own weakness, tried to avoid meeting him. William had already secured Kiau-Chau from his cousin in the course of a drive they took together. When he finally obtained his signature to the treaty of Björkö, in 1904, he thought he was going to reap the fruit of his long efforts. But the treaty did not come into force, and the "continental" policy failed, in consequence of France's opposition. From that time onwards William understood that her consent was an essential condition of this policy, and at the same time most difficult to secure. *He did not abandon his aims, but during the following years he tried to achieve them by intimidation.* The Björkö treaty was, in itself, an indirect attempt to force the alliance on France (it was to come into play against her, if she did not join it). The 1905 manœuvre was more imperatively aimed at the same end.

But the Kaiser did not wish to go as far as war. He thought it more imposing, more "modern", more consistent with his ambition, to be the Emperor of Peace than the Emperor of Victory. He disapproved of the idea of his own landing at Tangier, and only decided on it at the instance of Bülow (who was influenced for his part by Holstein), after considerable hesitation, to which the favourable atmospheric

[1] Up to 1904, he lavished attentions of all kinds on the French Government.

conditions put an end. Nor did he favour the Agadir coup in 1911, when he merely endorsed a decision taken by others. On the 1st of January, 1912, talking over with Jules Cambon the work of Franco-German pacification accomplished during the previous autumn, the Kaiser claimed his share in it and said: "We are still at the stage of having cooked the potatoes, but later on statues will be erected to us".[1]

The Evolution of 1913.

We shall not find him still in this frame of mind in 1914. The change seems to have come about during the second half of 1913. It was then that William II. became fully aware of the danger to Germany of the Entente encirclement, and came to the conclusion that it was useless to think of averting it by diplomatic means. Bethmann no longer appeared to him anything more than a "pacifist at any price".[2] His policy of conciliation had failed both at home and abroad. The German people had been deceived, and felt they had been duped. As Jules Cambon wrote, "The credit the Emperor had been given for peace seemed exhausted".[3] The Kaiser at last felt the weight of the military and naval power whose development he had so strongly favoured, and which demanded to be of use now that it had been expanded. The Crown Prince, who advocated a more active policy, was supported by the Nationalists in opposition to him, and a rivalry was established between the father and son.

The sovereign's jealous nature could ill brook the reproach of weakness that was made against him; he determined to take the first opportunity of showing more firmness. During the year 1913, he constantly complained to foreign passers by of the construction of the strategic railways in Poland; he expressed pessimistic opinions as regards the future, and aired the question of a preventive war. At the beginning of November, he told the King of the Belgians that war with France was "inevitable".

[1] Quoted by J. Reinach, *Histoire de Douze Jours.*
[2] William II, *My Memoirs.*
[3] Yellow Book.

He even said to Davidov, " From my point of view, the moment a war has become inevitable, it matters little who the aggressor is ". No doubt, his statements must not be taken literally. They answered the need he always felt of instantly blurting out all the thoughts that passed through his mind. They can be explained by his anxiety to make an impression, to inspire fear, and perhaps even to preserve peace, thanks to the " bluff " of resolution and strength ; by curiosity as to the effect they would produce, and by a wish to justify possible events in advance, or to be convinced himself, or indeed to give vent in words to a tendency he would not act upon. Very often, with him, the ideas enunciated were only witty sallies ; it would be a mistake always to associate them with his will, or to look to them for the explanation of a policy. These bellicose remarks were of no more importance than many others made in the course of his reign, which were never followed up ; they were refuted by contrary statements ; [1] and did not prevent his working for peace during the whole of 1913. But it must be remembered that, in the last autumn before the war, they corresponded with a modification of his attitude with regard to Austria. In October, at a time when Bethmann-Hollweg was still against war with Serbia, the Kaiser so far threw off all restraint as to say to Hötzendorf : " I was an advocate of peace, but this is too much of a good thing. I am with you. The others are not ready, and will do nothing. In two days you must be in Belgrade ".[2]

Fear of Encirclement.

Moreover, as time went on, these feelings of pessimism, and resignation to the prospect of war, spread amongst the influential classes in Berlin. In the spring of 1914, indeed, Germany had fresh cause for anxiety. In spite of Grey's denials, the Wilhelmstrasse had acquired the certainty that negotiations had been started with a view to the conclusion of an Anglo-Russian naval agreement. Besides that, a

[1] At the beginning of July 1914, Tisza still pointed out " the Emperor William's bias in favour of Serbia ".

[2] Hötzendorf, loc. cit.

frankly war-like article, attributed to the Russian War Minister, Sukhomlinov, and published in the *Birschevija Wjedomosti*, under the heading: "Russia is ready, France must be ready, too", had caused great excitement in Berlin. On the 16th of June, the Chancellor wrote to Lichnowsky that the Pan-Germans were no longer alone in attributing offensive projects to Russia, and that "calmer and more sedate politicians were now beginning to associate themselves with this view".[1] He foresaw "a fresh armament fever", and indicated that the Emperor was in favour of increasing the military and naval forces. The latter simply made a marginal note on a document, to the effect that those who did not believe that France and Russia were preparing for war "deserved to be sent to a lunatic asylum".

He did not think, however, that his enemies would attack Germany or Austria directly and at once. He explained to Francis Joseph and Berchtold,[2] on the 23rd of March, in Vienna, that he believed the Muscovite ambitions were primarily directed against Turkey, the preparations in the west being intended to safeguard against any outside interference. But if Russia met with any resistance from the Central Empires, she would not hesitate to attack them as soon as her army was quite ready, which, according to competent authorities, would be towards 1916[3] or 1917. In short, there was as much confidence in Berlin that an immediate attack was unlikely, as that an attack was certain before long.

[1] German Documents.

[2] Report published by Montgelas, *The Case for the Central Powers*.

[3] This is the date given by Eggeling, the military attaché in Russia, in his reports. The Kaiser had also discussed the possibility of a Russian attack in 1916 with Warburg (Reichstag Committee of Enquiry). The date 1917 is given in a General Staff memorandum drafted in the spring of 1914 (General Douchy) and in a conversation between Moltke and Lerchenfeld (Bavarian Documents).

VIII

THE CRISIS

The Sarajevo Crime and a Preventive War.

A cynical and resolute minded man, holding this dual belief, would at once have come to the conclusion that a preventive war was a necessity. But it would be a mistake to credit the Emperor and his Chancellor with a policy coherent and bold enough to aim clearly at such an end. In spite of its marked evolution, the Berlin Government had not reached the point of breaking with tradition. The despatch of General von Liman Sanders on a mission to Constantinople, at the end of 1913, seemed a provocation to Russia at first. But Bethmann-Hollweg ended by adopting the very formula proposed by the Russian Government, to delimit his powers. At the beginning of 1914, Stumm said, in reply to Naumann, who was considering the hypothesis of a preventive war, that the Chancellor and the Wilhelmstrasse were definitely against it.[1] Again at Konopischt, in June, William II. evaded Francis Ferdinand's inquiry whether Austria could count on Germany "under all circumstances".[2] And the very day after the crime, the first opinion Berchtold and Tisza expressed was that, if Austria attacked Serbia, Germany would abandon her.[3] *The view now taken is that the policy of* 1913, *which tended to subject the Dual Alliance to Germany's control, was fundamentally incompatible with the policy of* 1914, *which seemed to associate her unconditionally with Austria's decisions. But this contrast was not so clear to the Berlin Government. The unforeseen Sarajevo crime was the factor which transformed the problem, and explains the turn taken.*

[1] Naumann's deposition before the Reichstag Committee of Enquiry.
[2] Told by Francis Joseph to Hötzendorf (*Aus meiner Dientszeit*, IV.).
[3] Hötzendorf, loc. cit.

To begin with, the murder of the Archduke made it more difficult for Germany to be completely indifferent. Both in Bethmann-Hollweg and Bülow's time it had been a cardinal principle of Germany's policy that she must support Austria in all "vital" questions. Possible as it may have been for her to refuse to recognize the Balkan disputes in which Austria would have liked to involve her the year before, as essential, it was far more difficult in a case where monarchical as well as inter-allied solidarity had to be considered. In addition to that, the German Government were beginning to exhaust their "peace credit" in Austria too. After so many refusals, it was necessary to reinforce the alliance by some demonstration of fidelity. *But above all, the Berlin authorities thought that, in view of this Slav provocation, they would be able to adopt a firmer attitude without thereby incurring greater risks.* What tempted them was the hope of restoring the diplomatic position at a stroke, but without war. The solidity of the Austro-German alliance was doubted in Europe. Vienna and Berlin would solemnly affirm it. After all, what was the cause of its weakness? Russia's increasing influence in the Balkans? After the humiliation of Serbia, the situation would be reversed, the Dual Monarchy would form a fresh Balkan *bloc* around it. Austria had lost her prestige in the world and her faith in herself? She would recover them by acting. She was already strengthened and re-united by indignation, prepared, for the first time, to be firm.

Her plan of action was received with scepticism in Berlin at first; then, when it was carried out, this evidence of her determination gave satisfaction. The German Government were too naïve to see that such a reckless decision was rather a sign of weakness than of strength, and showed that there were great dangers ahead. They thought that for once the moral forces were on the side of the Central Empires. Was not the crime generally condemned in Europe? At all events all the sovereigns would be on the Kaiser's side against the "regicides",[1] and the Tsar the

[1] In the case of the Kaiser, dynastic feeling was strengthened by anxiety for his own safety. He was advised not to go to Vienna for the Archduke's funeral for fear of another attempt.

first of all. But if Russia should still rebel, if she carried the dispute to the point of war, there was a disposition to be wearily satisfied that the duel which had menaced Europe for too long should at last be fought. Germany was ready. In accepting war on this ground she would be sure of England's neutrality, and would thus avoid the struggle she must necessarily have had to go through, later on, against the combined Triple Entente. Moreover, she would have nothing to reproach herself with, for she would not be the one responsible for the slaughter. *Russia's claims would be proof of her latent aggressive intentions, which the future would have brought to light. If war came, it would be because it was inevitable.*[1]

This was how it stole its way into the calculations of the statesmen, without entirely obscuring what remained of their pacific spirit. They had not made the pretext for it, nor had they chosen the moment; they had waited for events themselves to raise one of those questions with which chance periodically confronted them, and, even then, they had tried to leave the decision to the adversary. These timorous spirits pursued several aims rather than abandon one, they sought both success and peace. They thought they were sure to succeed in any case: there would either be immediate war, but under conditions no longer proposed by the future, or war later on, but then their position would have been retrieved by their diplomatic success, and the chances would be equal. The principle on which they acted was the one Poincaré summed up, a year later, in his famous saying: "France does not want war, but she does not fear it".[2] *Thus Germany embarked on a dangerous path, but by a fortuitous decision: her action remained subject to the changing conditions of the diplomatic atmosphere: she would shape her course in accordance with the temptations offered by events.* In view of her initiative, what were the intentions of the Triple Entente, what plan had they for frustrating this attempt and yet preserving peace?

[1] All these considerations are clearly explained in Jagow's despatches to Lichnowsky and Szögyény's to Berchtold.

[2] Speech at Nantes, 1913. Jagow wrote similarly to Lichnowsky: "I don't wish for a preventive war, but if we are offered war, we must not refuse it".

The Franco-Russian Alliance in 1914.

In a preceding chapter, devoted entirely to the crisis of July 1914, we only considered the Russian decisions, for the simple reason that the French Government had pledged themselves in advance to them. In this second part of our study, there being no longer any need to simplify the problem, reducing it to a few data essential to enable us to form some hypothesis rapidly, as a guide to our further investigations, it will be expedient to inquire into how far those decisions could have been determined by French influence.

It is rather difficult for the historian to state this exactly. In fact, we have no reports of the conversations that took place in Petersburg, nor do we know what telegrams were sent subsequently from the cruiser *France*. But at all events we know from Paléologue's account what the atmosphere was when Poincaré was there, Cruppi has told us what impression the visit made on the Tsar, the diplomatic documents show what decisions were then taken; and these elements enable us to assert without any risk of being mistaken, *that the political tradition already adopted was faithfully carried on. As on several occasions in* 1912 *and* 1913, *in grave circumstances, Poincaré promised the Russian Government France's loyalty from the beginning of the crisis, and without any warning or reserve, thus doing away with the check Allied control might have constituted: he fixed a rigid principle on which to base the common action of Russian and French diplomacy, in a dispute in which France was not directly interested, whose observance in all circumstances must increase the chances of war: finally, knowing the extreme and premature decisions Russia was going to take, he confined himself to giving advice which might perhaps render her line of action more effective, but not more pacific.*

Poincaré and the Austro-Serbian Conflict.

On the 22nd of July, before even knowing the purport of the Austrian ultimatum, the French Government took

up a position with regard to it, and advocated a firm attitude. Sazonov telegraphed to his Minister in Vienna that day: "From my explanation with the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, it is quite clear that France, anxious as to the turn Austro-Serbian relations may take, is not disposed to allow a humiliation of Serbia which is not justified by the circumstances".[1] And Viviani added in his telegram from Reval (24th July, 1 a.m.) that joint action by the Triple Entente Powers, to *prevent* the Austrian ultimatum from being sent, had been considered in the course of the Petersburg interviews.[2]

It was Poincaré, Paléologue again tells us, who proposed this "Europeanization" of the dispute which was so invariably urged by Russia afterwards. But at the same time, in every step they took, his Government affected to consider that the position taken up by Russia was irreducible, whilst Austria's was not, and this amounted to saying that *mediation ought only to consist in pressure being put on Austria until the latter could be induced to adopt the Russian standpoint;* they considered that there was no need to do more than inquire into the Austro-Serbian dispute, they refused to regard Russia as a party to the dispute and consequently liable to be asked to make concessions by the arbiter, they wanted to give her all the advantages of a disinterested mediator, although Austria refused to admit this position, and although she herself resorted to the threat of appealing to armed force.

To show that this is not the attitude that the interests of peace would naturally suggest to an honest mind, we need only observe the first reactionary effect of the crisis on Bienvenu-Martin, the acting President of the Council. On the 24th, in the course of an interview with Schoen, he approved of the German theory of "localization", and assured him that France "would endeavour to act in that sense".[3] On the 26th, he said he was prepared to influence Russia, and added: "Sazonov's idea that only the Powers as a whole can judge of Serbia's attitude, is difficult to justify from the legal point of view".[4] On his behalf,

[1] *Livre Noir*, Sazonov to Schebeko, the 22nd of July.
[2] Yellow Book, No. 23.
[3] German Documents, No. 154.
[4] Ibid., No. 235.

Sevastopulo telegraphed: "The Minister asks whether the four Powers, England, Germany, Italy, and France, could not take steps in *Petersburg* and Vienna, seeing that the affair amounts in reality to an Austro-Russian difference".[1] Bienvenu-Martin therefore considered that the first thing was to try to limit the conflict, and that, if there was to be mediation, it must be exerted conjointly on the two Great Powers at variance. But his opinion could not prevail against the one Poincaré had adopted in Petersburg without consulting him. And Sazonov, relying on the President's recent promises, replied by telegram to his Chargé d'Affaires, *clearly echoing the Petersburg conversations:* "I deem it important to lose no time in correcting a misunderstanding which has found its way into the answer given by the acting Foreign Minister to the German Ambassador. If it is a question of exerting a moderating influence in St. Petersburg, we protest against that straight away, for we adopted a standpoint, from the first, which we cannot modify, as we have already acceded to all Austria-Hungary's admissible demands. . . ."[2]

Poincaré's Attitude in Petersburg.

These significant words become still more comprehensible if we consider Poincaré's attitude in Petersburg, which accentuated the firmness of his advice, and gave it a dictatorial character. According to Paléologue's account, he figured as director of the alliance as soon as he arrived. "Naturally", the Ambassador wrote, describing the conversation between the President and the Tsar, "it was Poincaré who led the conversation. He was soon the only one speaking. The Emperor merely acquiesced". And he attributed this reflection to the spectators: "This is how an autocrat ought to speak".[3] On the 21st, Poincaré appeared for a short time at the reception of the Diplomatic Corps, when he talked to the British Ambassador of the necessity for closer union between the Entente Powers,

[1] *Livre Noir*, Telegram from Sevastopulo of the 26th of July.
[2] *Livre Noir*, Telegram from Sazonov of the 27th of July.
[3] Paléologue, *La Russie des Tsars*.

told the Japanese Ambassador that his country ought to join the Triple Entente, and then, leaving his allies, and turning to Szápáry, he changed his tone, reprimanded him, warned him that France would support Serbia, tactlessly reminded him of the Friedjung trial, and finally departed, leaving the representatives of the small Powers disappointed at his having passed them by in silence, merely addressing a few " words of sympathy " to the Serbian Minister.

On the 23rd, he made a grandiloquent speech, ending with a pronouncement on the terms of peace which we are told " sounded like a clarion-call ". The impression made in Russia by those demonstrations was profound. The Grand Duchesses Anastasia and Militza assured Paléologue that the President's words " formed a landmark in the history of the world ", that war was imminent, and that Germany would be destroyed. In 1915, the Tsar said to Cruppi : " I still remember how firmly the President of the French Republic spoke when taking leave of me on his departure from Russia on the 22nd of July, 1914 ". And on the 30th of July, when Sazonov urged the Tsar to give the fatal order for general mobilization, the reason he appealed to was that he must not " play his allies false ".

There was, consequently, no possible doubt as to Poincaré's attitude in Petersburg between the 20th and 23rd of July. Without having the least idea of the nature of the Austrian demands, or of Germany's intentions, he took up a position of firm opposition to which he gave a definite character, and from which he did not, as a matter of fact, recede in the slightest degree to the end. Such a policy assumes that the adversary's will is a blind force, incapable of changing or deviating from its course, and thus does away with all temptation to develop a pacific tendency.[1] From that time onwards, there was very little chance of averting the war, and, moreover, Poincaré had left Russia *carte blanche* to let it loose whenever she liked, seeing that

[1] And yet the situation was clearly understood, at all events in Paris. "The Central Powers ", Berthelot said to Sevastopulo, "are trying to gain a brilliant diplomatic victory, but they do not want war under all circumstances, although if it came to that, they would not shrink from it." That was no more than the truth.

two days after his departure, Paléologue, acting on his instructions, promised Sazonov unconditionally that, from the moment the Austrian ultimatum was delivered, France would fulfil all the obligations of her alliance, and that Viviani, who was with the President, said to Neklyudov, at Stockholm, on the 25th of July, " If it means war for you, of course it will mean war for us too ".[1]

Sazonov and Paléologue.

Having thus decided what his allies were to do, Poincaré embarked and, in his absence, the actual conduct of the negotiations passed into the hands of Sazonov and Paléologue, two men whose oriental descent and fatalism formed a bond between them, and who considered war inevitable. This was quite as much due to their temperament as to their political convictions. They both took a view of the diplomatic history of the last few years which led them to think that the Triple Entente had always, as Paléologue says in his memoirs, " given way to Germany ", that this could not go on, and that " the time had gone by for diplomatic combinations and manœuvres ".[2] Their prejudice was so strong that it blinded them to the weakness of the Austro-German alliance, and prevented their feeling any confidence in the only policy which could lead to peace. At the time when the dismemberment of Serbia was being discussed in Vienna, and the Austrian Government refused an explanation to the Berlin Government, whose opinion was, on the contrary, that " there was no further reason for war ",[3] Paléologue said to Sazonov: " If we had only Austria to deal with, I should still feel hope ". On the very day when Germany was interposing in Vienna in favour of peace, Sazonov said that she was " egging her on surreptitiously ". From the 28th onwards, the Ambassador and the Minister based all their calculations on the certainty

[1] Neklyudov, *Souvenirs diplomatiques*. English translation, *Diplomatic Reminiscences before and during the World War* (John Murray).

[2] And yet, the year before, Benckendorff wrote that the victory gained at the London Conference was " the greatest diplomatic success Russia had achieved for nearly a century " (*Livre Noir*).

[3] Note made by the Kaiser. German Documents.

of war, and their only concern was to secure support. "As far as Berlin and Vienna are concerned", Paléologue said that day to Sazonov, "the die is cast; it is of London that you must think."

France and the Russian Mobilization.

On his return to Paris, the 29th of July, Poincaré found a telegram from Sazonov, announcing his intention of expediting mobilization. According to Isvolsky, the French answer was composed after a nocturnal meeting between Poincaré, Viviani, and Messimy. It was transmitted to Russia in three different forms, the principle being the same in them all. The telegram sent to Paléologue, which was meant to figure in the Yellow Book, and to testify to France's pacific intentions, was couched in very moderate terms. After a fresh assurance of loyalty to the alliance, we find these lines: "It would be well that, in taking any precautionary measures of defence which Russia thinks must go on, she should not immediately take any step which may offer to Germany a pretext for total or partial mobilization of her forces".[1] The same counsel of prudence is given in the Political Director's conversation with Isvolsky, but this time the telegram reporting it makes no mention of suspension of the order for general mobilization which the telegram to Paléologue seemed to suggest; on the other hand, the French Government sent word to the Ambassador through their representative that their advice did not mean that they wished to "interfere" with the Russian military preparations. Finally, the War Minister told Colonel Ignatiev, the Russian military attaché, that Russia "could say that she was willing to delay her preparations for mobilization temporarily, in the higher interests of peace, which would not prevent her from carrying on and even increasing her military preparations, while abstaining, as far as possible, from transporting large bodies of troops".[2] *The gradation between these three pronouncements is very clear: from moderation to hypocrisy,*

[1] Yellow Book, No. 101.
[2] *Livre Noir*, Telegram from Isvolsky of the 30th of July.

from advice to abstain from mobilizing to advice to keep the mobilization dark; there was no longer a question of any but verbal concessions.

France's attitude in this respect with regard to Russia was very like the English attitude to France, which we have already analysed; the Foreign Minister took care not to commit himself, his despatches were irreproachable, his language moderate, and the gravest diplomatic decision was taken in the form of a technical arrangement, and stated by word of mouth. Moreover, the advice given by Messimy seemed to show such extraordinary ignorance of the conditions of Russian mobilization as to be hardly genuine. Not being capable of practical application, it amounted in fact to approval of general mobilization, *and it must be assumed that the only object of the French Government was to favour it, while taking no responsibility for it.*

The same evening (30th July), Paléologue telegraphed, as though announcing compliance on the part of Russia: "The Russian Government have decided to take secret steps to carry out the preliminary measures of general mobilization",[1] which, in reality, was senseless, the proper definition of general mobilization being a *public* order, which cannot be kept secret. The next day (31st July), he telegraphed more simply: "General mobilization is ordered". But the French Government substituted for this laconic sentence a fictitious and explanatory text in which he justifies the Russian decision by Austrian general mobilization and the German preparations.[2]

Now that the real wording has been restored,[3] there are only two possible hypotheses. *Either the Russian Government interpreted the French reply as consent, and thought they were acting in accordance with the views of their ally, or else they regarded it as advice not to mobilize, and, counting on former assurances, took no notice of it. No doubt the first of these hypotheses is the one to accept, as neither the French Government nor their Ambassador have ever complained of*

[1] This sentence was omitted from the Yellow Book where it ought to have appeared in No. 102.
[2] Yellow Book, No. 118.
[3] Renouvain quoted them in his course of lectures at the Sorbonne.

any want of harmony between the advice from Paris and the course taken in Petersburg.[1]

State of Mind of the Russian Government.

Deprived of the support of French opposition, the Russian Government were gradually drawn into a warlike current. The Tsar sincerely wished for peace, but how could it be expected that he would maintain it to the end, knowing his feminine, versatile character, and remembering his misguided folly in allowing himself to be involved in war with Japan? One feels that he was already worsted when he sent the Kaiser the dramatic telegram of the 29th we have quoted, and which clearly meant: "Come to my rescue, otherwise I shall bring about a disaster". Most of the members of the Government were in a disconsolate and resigned frame of mind. The War Minister deplored the state of the army. The Minister of Marine said the Fleet was not in a condition to fight. The Minister of the Interior burnt candles before his ikons. Sazonov went on proposing methods of negotiation, but without adhering to his initial concessions and without believing in success; he said he was in favour of partial mobilization, but he knew that it was impossible.

On the 28th, Austria's declaration of war on Serbia made a sensation in Petersburg, and rendered the pressure of the advocates of war irresistible. On the 29th, Sazonov brought the Tsar the order for general mobilization; the Tsar signed it, then withdrew it, and substituted an order for partial mobilization. Sazonov became impatient, he rebuked his sovereign, induced him, in the afternoon of the 30th, to sign a second order, and, lest he should change his mind again, Januschkevitch said to Dobrorolsky, who was instructed to issue the order: "After that, don't show yourself again to-day".[2]

The Rubicon was crossed.

[1] This shows what value to attach to the statement made by Viviani to Schoen, a few hours before the French answer was sent. He then said he was in favour of "the most prompt mediation in no matter what form". But this mediation having been started, he allowed Russia to seal its doom by her mobilization.

[2] Dobrorolsky, loc. cit

Partial Mobilization and General Mobilization.

We have already spoken, at the beginning of this book, of the decisive character of these events. But what we have learnt of Russia's military organization, in studying the history of the period immediately preceding the war, now enables us to form a more correct estimate of them, and to see which really was the date of vital importance. It was not the one on which the order for general mobilization was given, for the situation on that day was no longer intact. Partial mobilization had been decided upon on the 29th ; now, as we have said, it could not last for more than twenty-four hours without involving irreparable disorder. Consequently, *on the 30th, the Tsar could only choose between three possibilities : the possibility of converting partial into general mobilization ; of cancelling the partial mobilization altogether ; or of continuing the partial mobilization, and thereby sacrificing the possibility of subsequent general mobilization.* This last solution was obviously inadmissible, and the second also very difficult to imagine, seeing that Russian public opinion had become more and more excited since the day before, instead of calming down. We are thus led to believe that the Tsar had already set the machinery, as it were, irreversibly in motion, and that in substituting partial for general mobilization, he had hardly done more, practically, than delay the latter for a day.[1] And at the same time the question that has been disputed since the Sukhomlinov trial : was the general mobilization really suspended ? loses much of its interest.

Repercussions in Germany.

On the other hand, in order to estimate the influence of the Russian military measures on Germany's attitude, there is more to be considered than merely the dates of the official decisions, and of their communication to Berlin. In reality, up to the 29th, the German Government did not receive any diplomatic information with regard to the

[1] Basily told Paléologue that day that the Russian Government could not choose between partial and general mobilization (*La Russie des Tsars*).

Russian preparations. But after the 26th, military reports, sent by the dozen, had described them every day, and what they learnt in this way from agents who saw what was going on, was not always what the Russian Government had decided. For instance, in the German frontier district of Suwalki, the system of partial mobilization was designed to bring about general mobilization automatically ; General Dobrorolsky tells us this himself.

Consequently the German Government had the greatest difficulty in understanding exactly how far Russia had mobilized. They could not rely on the Russian statements, seeing that the Tsar himself had told them, on the 29th, that they had been deceived for five days. They were led to think the situation serious, for, however much they seem not to have been aware of the absolute inseparability of the Russian mobilizations, they none the less realized that a great forward move was in question, which would lead to aggression unless they put a stop to it from the first.

Imagine the state of mind of the responsible leaders, besieged by alarming and contradictory news, in this atmosphere ; the excitement which reigned in Berlin and was transmitted to the negotiations, in which haste was in itself a war factor ; the ascendancy the military authorities would acquire over the Government, in presence of the danger ; the coalition of fear, distrust, and pride, that was formed, and that paralysed the wills of the peace party : this will give an idea of what the situation really was.

The Race Between Mobilization and Mediation.

On the 29th of July, the date of the mobilization of thirteen Army Corps in Russia, particularly disquieting information reached Berlin at the same time as the Tsar's telegram, and the Chief of the General Staff sent the Chancellor a long memorandum in which he explained the necessity of clearing up the diplomatic situation without delay, to prevent France and Russia from continuing to pursue their policy of improving their military position whilst taking care not to incur any responsibility. Hötzendorf, for his part, seconded by Berchtold, sent word to the

Berlin Government that he "considered it absolutely essential to have something settled at once", and to know whether he would have to fight one adversary or two.[1] As a matter of fact, after the fifth day of mobilization against Serbia, it would be too late to make the changes necessary to convert it into mobilization against Russia. At the same time, the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador requested that Russia should be warned that her partial mobilization would lead to "very extensive counter-measures being taken in Austria and Germany".

Bethmann-Hollweg, however, refused to be convinced. In his memoirs, the Kaiser clearly indicates the existence of this conflict of opinion prior to the Russian general mobilization: "When I returned to Potsdam, I found the Chancellor and the Foreign Secretary at variance with the Chief of the General Staff. General von Moltke was of opinion that war was inevitable, whilst the Chancellor and the Foreign Secretary were confident that it would not come to that, and that war might be averted, subject, however, to my not giving the order for mobilization".[2] *This difference of opinion became even more acute as things grew worse, for the Chancellor, seeing the alliances working against him, was all the more inclined to preserve peace, and the Chief of the Staff to open hostilities without delay, in order to compensate by rapidity for numerical inferiority, and rally waverers by an initial victory.*

It was in vain that Austria begged Bethmann-Hollweg to send Russia an ultimatum in order to put a stop to her mobilization; he rejected this suggestion, and merely took amicable steps: as Jagow said to Jules Cambon, he did not consider mobilization against Austria alone a *casus belli*. On the evening of the 29th, he disputed the military theory at a Council, and told the Prussian Ministers the next day that he had been successful in carrying his point with His Majesty.[3] Lerchenfeld also telegraphed to Munich, on the 30th, that the declaration of a "state of imminent danger of war" had been postponed.[4]

[1] German Documents, No. 352.
[2] William II., *My Memoirs*.
[3] German Documents, No. 456.
[4] Bavarian Legation reports, No. 16.

Does it follow that, but for Russia's fresh move on the 30th of July, Germany would not have gone to war? No, for if some miracle had enabled the Tsar to avoid turning partial into general mobilization, fate might have been accomplished in some other way. On the 29th, Berchtold telegraphed to Berlin that if the Russian mobilization measures were not suspended at once, general mobilization must be ordered in Austria-Hungary without further delay, for military reasons; and, on the evening of the 30th, this mobilization was decided upon in principle, subject to fresh consideration on the 31st.[1] *Now it would determine that of Petersburg, and consequently that of Berlin.* There is no doubt that Bethmann-Hollweg was opposed to the idea and that he could have prevented its being carried out by refusing to countenance it. *But a coalition had been formed between the Austrian and German General Staffs, with the object of confronting him with a fait accompli.*

And now we come back to Russia's partial mobilization as being the central event, for its progress, hardly distinguishable from general mobilization, was the pretext on which the military authorities acted in trying to "turn" the Chancellor's position, and it gave them the necessary courage. The development of Moltke's policy during the day and night of the 30th of July was remarkable. In the morning, he told the Austrian military attaché that the measures Russia had taken were not sufficient to justify an extreme decision; in the evening he contradicted this by advising Hötzendorf to mobilize; on the 31st, at 7 a.m., he sent him another telegram: "Mobilize at once", and this time he added: "Germany will mobilize". The fact is that he spent his whole time at the telephone, waiting for news from the eastern frontier, and each hour that passed gave him further reason to assume, from what he heard, that general mobilization had been ordered in Russia; on the 31st, the first thing in the morning, he was certain of it, and it was then that he sent Hötzendorf the decisive telegram. Finally, at midday, on the strength of this information, which confirmed a telegram from Petersburg, the diplomats and the Chancellor consented to the proclamation

[1] Hötzendorf, loc. cit.

of a " state of imminent danger of war ".[1] " Their opposition will break down, like themselves, for that matter ", William II. wrote.[2] *Bethmann-Hollweg had been beaten in the race between mediation and mobilization.*

Last Steps Taken by Bethmann-Hollweg.

Moreover, however firm the Chancellor may have been in not yielding to the military authorities on the vital question of mobilization, he had at least recognized, since the day before, that he must push his mediation to a conclusion, to success or defeat, without further delay, so that they might know where they were. Therefore, whilst adhering to his diplomatic position, he asked for an immediate reply from Vienna, " so that this episode may be ended one way or other " is what he wrote to the Kaiser.[3] *He tried to preserve peace, to satisfy his conscience, and, at the same time, to wind up the diplomatic business, to satisfy the General Staff;* and, assuming the worst hypothesis in advance, his chief concern was to improve its conditions by his last conciliatory acts. He advised the Kaiser to send another telegram to the Tsar, throwing the responsibility for the final decision on to the latter, and pointed out that " the document would be particularly valuable historically ".[4] He stated the same day, at a meeting of the Prussian Cabinet, that " the essential was to put Russia in the wrong "[5]; and he admitted that, in consequence of Russia's mobilization, " the proposals made to Vienna had become more or less illusory ". Similarly, the Kaiser wrote on the margin of a telegram he had just received: " I cannot consent to mediate, seeing that the Tsar, who has appealed to me to do so, has at the same time secretly mobilized behind my back. Of course it is only a manœuvre. . . . My rôle is at an end ".[6]

Consequently from that time onwards there was very little hope. Bethmann-Hollweg struggled with difficulty in this whirlpool. He admitted sadly at the Prussian Cabinet

[1] Mobilization was only ordered the next day, as the Kaiser wished to give the Tsar yet another chance of countermanding the Russian mobilization (*vide* his telegram of the 31st of July).
[2] William II., *My Memoirs*. [3] German Documents, No. 407.
[4] Ibid., No. 408. [5] Ibid., No. 456. [6] Ibid., No. 390.

Council that " the control was lost ".[1] It looked as though he no longer quite knew himself what he was working for. When, at eleven o'clock at night, he stopped the execution of the pressing instructions he had just sent Tschirschky for the third time that day, he first explained his sudden change of mind by a communication from the General Staff with regard to the Russian military preparations, which, he had been told, " forced them to take prompt decisions if they did not wish to be taken by surprise ". Under the influence of this information, he cancelled everything that referred to Austria's responsibility in his previous communication, he gave up accusing his ally of " positively wishing for war ", and only adhered to his request for information, but fixing a limited time for the reply (" tomorrow ") and adding that he wanted things " definitely " settled, " particularly decisions of a military nature ".[2] Then he reflected, thought, no doubt, that he might be compromised by having said so much, and stopped this second telegram by telephone just as he had cancelled his instructions by the former. He ended by falling back on the arrival of a telegram from the King of England and forwarding it without comment. These documents, which have been preserved for us in the German archives, enable us to see clearly what his thoughts were, during that tragical night: he had lost all hope of peace, and was considering alternately how to hasten the inevitable catastrophe and to prepare history.

England and Germany.

For us, the real problem is to discern clearly the period of sincere goodwill that elapsed between the time when the Chancellor did not believe in war and the time when he thought of nothing but facing it under the best possible moral conditions. In our opinion, there is no doubt that on the 29th, when they heard of the mobilization of the thirteen Russian Army Corps, the German Government sincerely wished for peace, and saw how it could be preserved. On that day, an opportunity occurred that the Chancellor had always waited for, and that

[1] German Documents, No. 456. [2] Ibid., No. 451.

only the alarming progress of the enemy mobilization prevented his seizing. Since 1912, after having had to recognize the undoubted existence of the Triple Entente, which his predecessor had denied, he had perseveringly tried to bring about a *rapprochement* with England.

What he thought was that if the naval difficulty which stood between England and Germany could be rendered less acute, or even if it ceased to dominate the relations between the two countries entirely, the former insular policy of reserve and balance of power would be resumed as regards the east, where there was a tendency to transport the Franco-German conflict. He took advantage of Cassel's overtures to endeavour to negotiate an agreement. Unfortunately Tirpitz and the Kaiser were in league against him; he could not secure the repeal of the Naval Law already passed, and only succeeded in getting its execution delayed. Haldane, who was sent to Berlin by the British Government, seemed at first disposed to be satisfied with this, but, on reflection, his principals thought the concessions insufficient.

On two occasions, during the negotiations, and after they were broken off, Bethmann-Hollweg, disappointed in his hopes, sent in his resignation. The Emperor having refused to accept it, he returned to his project of Anglo-German *rapprochement*, trying to bring it about this time through a colonial *entente*. His idea was to settle all the secondary questions which divided the two Powers and reserve the great question of naval rivalry, just as he wanted to settle the Moroccan difficulties with France and reserve Alsace-Lorraine. In 1914, when the war broke out, England and Germany were on the point of signing an extensive agreement, and there was already a better feeling between them; at the London Conference in 1913, the two Powers were almost invariably in agreement. These signs of improvement deceived Bethmann-Hollweg to the extent of making him believe that he had succeeded in his great aim, in spite of the disappointments of 1912, and had created a new fellowship which would be clearly shown in the hour of danger.

As a matter of fact, the formation, during crises, of a group

of Powers relatively disinterested, capable of acting as joint arbiters and willing to interpose between the combatants, was really the only hope of peace, in view of the growing rivalry between the Dual Entente and the Dual Alliance. A spontaneous agreement of this kind, one of those "peace alliances" Jaurès talked of, might have contained the germ of the League of Nations which was to come into being after the war. Had not England and Germany already figured as "Europeans" and mediators in the Balkan disputes of the preceding year, to the great advantage of all?

Passing Agreement.

Towards the end of July 1914, *there were indeed signs of the rapprochement Bethmann-Hollweg had dreamt of. The two Powers, so soon to be enemies, were more in agreement with one another than with any of their allies. They had agreed on a common formula—"halt in Belgrade"—and seemed powerful enough to enforce it on Europe.* But this only lasted for a few hours, for when the two Governments reached the understanding they were no longer masters of the situation. In order to maintain peace, it would have been necessary for them both to have decided to put pressure on the first aggressor, by declaring war or withdrawing their alliance.

But Germany had rashly pledged the future by acting as accomplice in a plan of diplomatic intimidation, and when she wanted to back out of it, it had become very difficult to reconcile her rôle of mediator with her rôle of ally. England, on the other hand, could not keep up the paradox of feeling herself in the German camp, owing to the position she had taken up, and in the French camp, owing to her secret agreements. And after showing that she was incapable—as we have seen—of exerting a moderating influence on her allies, she was on the point—as we shall see—of allowing herself to be drawn into the war by them.

Grey and British Public Opinion.

Grey saw, from the beginning of the crisis, that, if the conflict became general, England would be involved. The only

way of avoiding intervention was by averting the war itself. He seemed to cherish that hope at first, or at all events he appealed to it in order to escape making any statement with regard to the English attitude that would have been too definite. Faced with the Austro-Serbian conflict his first reaction was to deny the existence of any danger to Great Britain. He said she had no interest in the question and would only intervene in case of an Austro-Russian dispute. Not that he was under any misapprehension as to the significance of the Austrian ultimatum. But at that time, Winston Churchill tells us, *the majority of the Cabinet, and public opinion in general, would have seen many objections to England's going to war: for the British Empire to be involved, Austria's attack on Serbia would have to be transformed into a German attack on France by indirect means, that is to say, through the alliances; the Government imagined that it would be impossible to traverse all the intermediate stages, and refused to take too gloomy a view of the prospects.* The Foreign Minister was obliged to take these illusions into account, and wait till "Mr. Britling" began to see clearly. There are people who, failing to appreciate his real intentions, mistook his constitutional scruples for hypocrisy, and put down his policy to a Machiavellian wish to "allow" war to come about; we need only say that he could not have adopted any other attitude, in view of the state of public opinion.

Gradual Change.

On the 30th, Austria and Russia disregarded Grey's advice. He had tried in vain to settle the dispute without prejudicing England's decision to preserve both her liberty of action and peace; he would have saved the one by sacrificing the other. Germany and Russia having taken up arms, the possibility for which he had been preparing his country for the last eight years became a reality. But now that the moment foreseen had arrived, he still did not feel that he had a united people behind him.

In these difficult circumstances, which made it anything but easy to interpret the national will, Grey clung to the great

principle which had always inspired him: maintenance of the balance of power. In July 1914, *failure to maintain this balance would have meant to the English people the establishment of the greatest continental Power on the Channel coasts: this was what had to be prevented at all costs. The occupation of Belgium by Germany was only a particular instance of the general danger. Neither Ostend nor Calais could be allowed to fall into the hands of the enemy; a French defeat would be as bad as the violation of Belgian neutrality. But this determination might inspire several different policies. Would England decide to intervene at once, or later on, according to the chances of the war?* Would it be advisable to make sure of France being victorious from the beginning or only to come to the rescue in case of things going against her, or again, to remain neutral for some months and then force British peace terms on exhausted adversaries?

This was the real problem England had to solve, and at first she seemed to waver between these possibilities: in his first diplomatic interviews, Grey only discussed a war *à quatre*, in which England would not take part; and on the 28th of July, Bertie confined himself to telling Szécsen that England would intervene "if France were menaced with destruction". But *after the 29th, Grey defined his attitude, which became more and more clearly hostile to Germany.* He began by telling Lichnowsky that if Germany and France were implicated in the conflict, he must not take for granted that England would stand aside. Subsequently he refused to pledge England to neutrality if Germany refrained from any naval attack on France, or even if she respected Belgian neutrality. Finally, in his speech of the 3rd of August, he pointed out the necessity for British intervention before having even received definite information of Germany's ultimatum, and to justify his contention he appealed to the difficulty of re-establishing the balance of power in Europe and the Mediterranean after a French defeat.

French Pressure.

This change came about under increasing pressure from the French Government. The latter, who were staggered

for a moment by England's hesitation, which upset all their calculations, resorted to every possible means of implicating their ally: a personal letter from Poincaré to King George V, reminding him, with a mixture of firmness and discretion, of the moral obligation his country had incurred; alarming information forwarded to London with regard to the German preparations; withdrawal of the troops to a distance of ten kilometres, in honour of the Anglo-Saxons; to say nothing of the way in which news from the east was perverted. In order to expedite Russian intervention whilst making sure of English intervention, they went so far as to violate the military convention of 1892 twice. It stipulated that the signal for mobilization must be given by the Triple Alliance, whereas Russia took the initiative; and that Russia and France were to mobilize simultaneously, whereas two days elapsed between the two mobilizations. The French Government delayed giving the order, contrary to Viviani's first advice,[1] to enable them to carry out a diplomatic *ruse*. They knew that Russia's mobilization would inevitably cause Germany to mobilize with the least possible delay; and by allowing the latter to precede the French mobilization, they made it appear its sole cause, seeming themselves to have remained faithful to the defensive spirit of the Dual Alliance.

The dénouement having already been secured in Petersburg, while Paris still hesitated, reasons had to be found for this. To justify their attitude, the Quai D'Orsay pretended they had not been informed of the Russian decision for thirty hours after it was taken, and when they at last conveyed the information to London, they represented it as a reply to the Austrian general mobilization which had been ordered later. This enabled Poincaré to write to King George on the 31st: "We ourselves, from the initial stages of the crisis, have enjoined upon our allies an attitude of moderation *from which they have not swerved*",[2] and to go on to represent English intervention as a peace factor, when he knew that war was certain.

[1] His deposition at the Caillaux trial.

[2] *Collected Diplomatic Documents Relating to the Outbreak of the European War*, p. 543.

The Naval Alliance.

On the 4th of August, the news from Brussels effected moral unanimity in London and disposed of Grey's dilemma. But, prior to that,[1] he had already taken responsibility. On the 2nd, he had promised France England's naval co-operation in case of a German attack. Imagine the consequences of this decision, assuming that it had not been followed by the violation of Belgium's neutrality. To begin with, the German Fleet would have been imprisoned in Germany's ports, put out of action. Germany, it is true, said she was prepared to agree to this restriction, but Grey refused to have his hands tied by an agreement that he considered "much too limited", and in his speech in the House of Commons he showed plainly that, in his eyes, the naval decision was only the first stage of intervention on a more extensive scale. If this eloquent appeal had been disregarded, it would have involved the Foreign Secretary's resignation, probably followed by those of Asquith and Churchill, who had consistently supported his policy. And who would have been found to replace them, at a moment when the Conservatives had just declared themselves in favour of British intervention? In any case, public opinion was already excited, business was interrupted by uncertainty, and the Government were to some extent deprived of their liberty of action, for the pledge given on the 2nd of August put them at the mercy of the smallest naval incident.

Imagine the feeling the news of a first French reverse would have produced in this atmosphere; *how could the British Government, who would not allow the Germans to approach the Channel coast by sea, allow them to establish their armies there?* This decision of the 2nd of August "was not a declaration of war", Viviani said at the Caillaux trial, "but it was an acceptance of war in case of a possibility which was certain to be realized". And similarly Paul Cambon wrote: "I considered the game won. A great

[1] The author apologizes for having reversed the order of events, in a previous study; it is a question of hours, but it is important.

country cannot wage war by halves; once it decides to fight at sea, it must also fight on land". [1]

Belgium and the War.

Consequently England's intervention was inevitable, in any case. The decision might have been delayed for a few days, and the fate of the combats thereby modified, but then there would not have been the unanimity, the spontaneous rush, the enthusiasm necessary for great deeds, roused by the indignation felt on the 4th of August. *The war would not have been the same as the one that was fought, and Grey had felt this.* On the 31st, he tried to secure a statement with regard to Belgian neutrality from the future belligerents.[2] Jagow's evasive reply, which confirmed what had been foreseen by the English General Staff, was a first trump in his hand: he could now take the menace of its violation into account in his calculations, and produce an effect with it in his speeches. During the succeeding days, whilst taking decisions independently of this question, he endeavoured to gain time, waiting for the moment when he would have this excellent pretext for English intervention.

Finally, on the 4th of August, when the die was cast, this Belgian neutrality, which Grey had described on the 31st as an "important, but not decisive factor", which he had refused to safeguard on the 1st of August by a treaty of neutrality,[3] or to protect in advance, on the 2nd, by opposing the violation of Luxemburg, was given, in Asquith's speech, as the only reason for British intervention.

In reality, the invasion of Belgium had played the same part, as regards English public opinion, as the Russian general mobilization in Germany, and the false excuse of the bombardment of Nuremberg in France. It had been a welcome turn of fortune which came to the rescue of a menaced Government, the medium they employed to show the people the use of a war their leaders considered necessary. It seemed

[1] Recouly, *Les heures tragiques d'avant-guerre.*
[2] Blue Book, No. 114. [3] Ibid., No. 123.

a sufficient reason for an act already decided upon for less good reasons; it assured a political and economic antagonism being reduced to a moral proposition, and thus involved spiritual forces in the war.

The ring of fire was formed.

IX

RESPONSIBILITIES AND LESSONS

Immediate Responsibility for the War. The Real Question.

In this second part of our study, we have been led to regard the crisis of July 1914 chiefly as a period in which the nations were all drawn one after another into the war. As compared with this great preparation for war, how the questions of right, of which there was so much talk, pale! We have been able to ignore the Austro-Serbian difference, the apparent centre of the conflict, with quite a clear conscience. It would be perfectly useless to endeavour to find the possible basis of a solution in a direct agreement between these two Powers, seeing that there was no moment when Russia was inclined to come to terms or Austria to be satisfied. The Serbian Government was not the obstacle: the Prince Regent telegraphed to the Tsar, on the 24th of July: "We are prepared to accept those of the Austrian conditions which are compatible with the position of an independent State, as well as those to which your Majesty may advise us to agree".[1] And, during this time, Berchtold, in Vienna, was anxious lest they should be accepted in full, and saying that in that case "there must be more extensive interference". On the other hand, the proposal to "halt in Belgrade," which alone could lead to agreement between the Powers not directly interested, was made and discussed in the turmoil of the mobilizations, at a time when it was already too late.

We will therefore *deal with the "war guilt" question on a different plane to that on which it is usually placed*, before

[1] Orange Book, No. 6.

formulating our conclusions. Winston Churchill has compared the pre-war States to planetary bodies which could not approach one another too closely without developing irresistible forces of attraction, and coming into dire collision. If the idea this simile conveys is admitted, the one responsible for war is not the one who gives the attacking order, but the one who creates the state of tension which must inevitably result in this order being given, just as a spark is produced by contact between two magnetic poles. As Renouvin says, *less importance must be attached to the hasty decisions of the eleventh hour than to the deliberate resolutions which preceded them.* Only, this principle, which he applied to Russia to justify her mobilization, may also be applied to Germany to excuse her ultimatum. The diplomatic provocation came from the Central Empires, but it did not create the urgent peril; the military provocation was not altogether unexpected, but it obliged Germany to take immediate counter-measures. In reality, *Germany and Austria made the gestures which rendered the war possible; the Triple Entente made those which rendered it certain.*

Germany.

Relying on revelations of the mistakes made by their enemies, the propagandists beyond the Rhine now think that they can establish the innocence of the German Government of 1914. Let them beware! To show that they did not see the danger, that they tried, too late, to avert it, is not sufficient. To plead innocence on the ground of a miscalculation is a very poor defence. The love of peace which is only shown when the hope of victory is diminishing cannot be very great. The men who proposed to score a diplomatic success by means of threats certainly had neither the discernment nor the self-abnegation which alone can insure durable peace. They did not make equitable concessions from the first, with a view to preserving it, but counted rather on the element of surprise and on their strength. They based their plan of "localization" on the frail foundation of a lie, by denying the

previous understanding with Austria ; the exposure of this device was bound to increase the distrust felt by their enemies, and to precipitate measures of precaution, dictated by patriotism, which may be sufficient in themselves to bring about war.

The Triple Entente.

We are convinced, however that the Entente Powers were masters of the situation. It is easy to show the mistake they made by showing that peace was possible and that they omitted to take the steps necessary to preserve it. Each must form his own opinion of the nature of the mistake. At a time when no Government wished for a European war for its own sake, peace was still possible, subject to certain concessions being made. It is not only a question of finding out what gratuitous steps were taken in the direction of war, but also what sacrifices the Powers refused to make, in order to avert it. From this point of view, the question of responsibility is merely a question of determining the conditions on which peace might have been preserved, and then forming an opinion as to their value which will enable us to decide whether they were conditions which could have been accepted or not. It is less easy to condemn or absolve by this method than by the alternative generally proposed ; but at least *the answers to our inquiries will make it possible to distinguish between the two schools of thought*, that is, between those who wanted peace for its own sake, and those who only tolerated it so long as it furthered their ambitions.

Means of Preserving Peace.

1. The Triple Entente Governments could have put an end to the crisis at once, by advising Serbia purely and simply to give in to Austria, as they did in 1909. France, in particular, recommended this solution at that time, without being the least humiliated thereby ; and it would have been perfectly satisfactory in 1914, but for its having to be fitted in with Poincaré's eastern policy. But the events of 1912–1913, which were rendered possible by this

policy, had aggravated the Serbian danger to Austria, and prompted her to demand more reliable guarantees; at the same time, France and Russia had taken a very active part in Balkan disputes, and, had they adopted a passive attitude, the contrast might have made it seem a humiliating acceptance of a change in the balance of power to the advantage of the Central Powers, under pressure from the latter. Let us therefore simply note that a solution preferable in itself to war had already become psychologically impracticable in the atmosphere of 1914.

2. They could have agreed to the proposal San Giuliano made on the 27th of July: Austrian ultimatum to be presented by Europe, and accepted by Serbia; Russia to abstain from action, subject to her receiving an assurance of Austro-Hungarian *désintéressement*. It was an honourable solution, only proposed rather late. There can be no doubt that Austria did not wish for a settlement of this kind, which would have deprived her of her hopes of victory, but still she would probably have agreed to it, rather than lose Germany's support by refusing. Only, *Russia was not prepared to accept this solution, nor were her allies prepared to oblige her to do so.*

3. From that moment, a direct adjustment of the Austro-Serbian dispute became an impossibility. But in return, *the growing menace of war made the States not directly interested all the more disposed to be conciliatory.* England went beyond her first proposals of mediation. The Serbian reply deprived Germany's previous policy of its *raison d'être*, whilst, at the same time, the sense of danger inclined her to adopt a different policy. The Berlin Government adhered to their determination not to hesitate to fight, but only *if they could succeed in throwing the responsibility on to the adversary*;—to achieve this was Bethmann-Hollweg's constant endeavour. This criterion, adopted by the General Staff itself,[1] put the warlike elements in Germany *at the mercy of a clever manœuvre on the part of the peace party*, and the declarations previously made by the Berlin Government afforded a favourable opportunity for it. Bethmann-Hollweg was too much committed to the

[1] See Moltke's rescript of the 28th of July.

principle of the ultimatum to be able to disavow it, but he was also too much committed to the principle of Austrian *désintéressement* to be able to refuse to uphold it on the conclusion of peace between Austria and Serbia, or even to refuse to guarantee its honest application in advance, as, for that matter, he proposed doing, on the 29th.[1]

The two principles on which agreement ought to have been established between all the Powers, leaving Austria out of account, were: *for the moment, the "halt in Belgrade" proposal; for the future, Serbian integrity*, the principles which had already been agreed upon on the 29th between England and Germany. Isolated as she would have been in these circumstances, could Austria have persisted in a futile expedition? As early as on the morning of the 31st of July, she seemed to hesitate for a moment. On that day Berchtold sent an urgent summons to Hötzendorf to come and discuss the position, because his "impression was that Germany was wavering". What would have happened at that interview, but for the arrival of Moltke's telegram encouraging them to persevere, which was prompted by the progress of Russia's mobilization?

The Factor of Time.

Speaking generally, the mistake the Triple Entente made was in adopting the accelerated pace originally set by Austria and Germany, who had begun by hoping to score a diplomatic success without striking a blow. Their efforts consisted in sowing discord between their enemies, shuffling the cards, and rapidly creating irreversible situations. This in itself indicated the opposite course the Entente Powers ought to have pursued. They should have tried to prolong discussion, to clear up the situation, and organize absolute and public solidarity between themselves on definite bases. *There was no hurry about anything.* Austria had informed the Powers that her declaration of war on Serbia would not be followed by immediate invasion. In fact, the

[1] Buchanan telegraphed on the 30th of July that Sazonov said the "German Ambassador had told him yesterday afternoon that the German Government were willing to guarantee that Serbian integrity would be respected by Austria" (Blue Book, No. 97).

Austrian troops were not expected to cross the Serbian frontier before the 12th of August. Until then, the declaration of war was to remain quasi-Platonic, and Hötzendorf even thought it futile, on this account. Berchtold had been regretting the long delay ever since 1913,[1] foreseeing that he would not be able to resist an *action de paix* for so long, and Moltke still thought, on the 27th, for this reason, that nothing very serious would happen in Europe for another fortnight.[2]

Austria's continuing and completing her mobilization against Serbia during that time need not have been a source of alarm to the Entente. On the contrary, her military position would then have been very much less favourable, for, her partial mobilization once completed, it would have been almost impossible for her to turn back to confront Russia. Whilst Austria was concentrating her troops in the south, the fortnight's respite might have been employed in finding some means of adjusting the dispute, and making sure of help in case of war. It would then have been possible, whilst coming to an agreement with Germany as regards the very formula she had suggested, to obtain a promise of assistance from England in case of any evasion or aggression on the part of Germany. The time which would have elapsed would have given British public opinion an opportunity of becoming familiar with the idea of intervention, and the spirit of conciliation shown by France and Russia would not have failed to influence it. In this way, *the chances of victory must have been increased at the same time as the chances of peace, and there would have ceased to be any distinction between the two problems, for, had we been sure of England, Germany would certainly have been conciliatory.*

The Principles of 1912.

This precious opportunity was lost. The Triple Entente began by waiting for the enemy to take all the steps towards peace. Then, just when one of its members had decided to make the necessary concessions, the other two came to

[1] Hötzendorf, loc. cit. [2] Moltke's letters.

an understanding in order to precipitate hostilities. And yet, two years earlier, Poincaré himself had very clearly laid down the principles which ought to have been applied to the negotiations, though he did not observe them. In May 1912, as the Russian Government suggested pressure being put on Vienna, he replied that concessions on one side only would not effect a reconciliation, similar pressure would have to be brought to bear on the adversary at the same time.

A few months later, during the Balkan war, when the Austrian Government seemed to be contemplating a military expedition against Serbia, he warned Szécsen that "a situation brought about by military operations could not be final", and that the Powers might intervene "to safeguard their interests when the time came to conclude peace". Grey also thought that Austria ought not to intervene till the war was over, and contemplated the possibility of the two western Powers putting joint pressure on Vienna and Petersburg, in case of a conflict between Austria and Russia after a Balkan victory.[1] But when the situation was reversed in 1914, what happened? *No pressure was put on Petersburg, and the Powers intervened directly hostilities were opened.*

The Several Parts Played by the Powers.

Each of the three Powers played its part in the shortcomings of the group as a whole. England was to blame chiefly for her inertia and for the illusions she cherished. Grey hoped to influence his enemies by threats, and his allies by refusing to make any promises. But this method of endeavouring to restrain both had the opposite effect. Germany did not believe in the danger at first, and was warned of it very late; Russia and France knew of it, and counted on British co-operation. The Tsar's Government took a more active part in the drama, and brought about the final *dénouement*. Finally, France's consent formed, as it were, the apex of the pyramid, for the attitude of Petersburg depended as much on Paris as that of Belgrade on Petersburg.

[1] Paul Cambon to Poincaré, the 28th of October to the 8th of November, Yellow Book on Balkan Affairs, Nos. 215, 244.

Thus the whole of Europe went the wrong way to work to oppose war. It would not be correct, however, to conclude from this, as some do, that the groups were uniformly to blame. The only excuse for the Central Empires is that they gave peace some chances; the mistake the Entente made was in not taking advantage of them.

Remote Causes of the War.

But to confine our study to inquiry into the events of 1914 will not be sufficient. *Their chief importance is that they give us in substance the whole history of the preceding years.*

We said at the beginning of this book that, apart from the arrogance and panic on both sides which precipitated the *dénouement*, the diplomatic contest was essentially a struggle between two theories: "localization" and "Europeanization". But it is only now, at the end of our study, that we can realize its full significance. When Germany rejected the British proposal of a Conference, it was because it recalled her memories of London and Algeciras, and because she had come to regard the term as synonymous with diplomatic defeat. When she refused to accept the judgment of Europe, it was because in reality "Europe" no longer existed: it was broken up into enemy camps, and those who appealed to the name had no moral authority.

At the time of the policy of drawing the alliances closer, to generalize a question was to generalize the conflict, for all the problems were intermixed. How could Austrian aggression be dissociated from Balkan aggression; Liman von Sanders' mission from a Turkish defeat; the German military law of 1913 [1] from the disturbance of the balance of power brought about by the war in the east and the Franco-Russian preparations—two expressions of one and the same policy? How could Poincaré try to exercise a moderating influence on Russia in 1914, after having given her such marked encouragement in less favourable circumstances? In 1913, there were several occasions on which

[1] *Vide* the report on the reasons.

only a slight change in Russian, Austrian, or German policy would have been needed to implicate France, with her ally, in the question of Macedonia, or Albania, or Constantinople. The resolutions taken later on in Petersburg were foreshadowed in the conversations that took place in Paris between Isvolsky and Poincaré. In this inexorable sequence of history, events determined one another without its being possible to ascribe all the faults to one side.

Which was the worst? Austria's conduct or Russia's interference? [1] The dismemberment of Serbia contemplated in Vienna, or that of Austria proposed in Belgrade and Petersburg? The way in which the Slavs were divided up, or their revolt? It can be understood that there were many different opinions on these subjects. *If the faults on the Entente side were less apparent than those of their adversaries, it was often for fortuitous and superficial reasons.* In the Balkans, Russia and Austria were equally determined to modify the Balkan *status quo*, the former had the good fortune to be able to act through an intermediary, the latter, not having understood how to secure support among the small States in good time, was obliged to intervene herself in 1914.

Similarly, in Morocco, French Imperialism was shown by subtle evasion of pacts that had been signed, and German Imperialism by noisy and abusive protests. Germany, too late an arrival, was generally looked upon as an intruder in a world in which her conquests were nevertheless far from equal to her progress, and her militarism, similar to that of other nations, but proportioned to greater strength, assumed a menacing aspect. The Empire of 1910 was persistently identified with the Empire of 1880, and when it extended its activities this was regarded as a breach of tradition, a war policy succeeding a peace policy. The dissimilarity between the Constitutions and public opinions in the different countries, created unequal conditions for Ministers with war tendencies: in Germany they could act rashly with a certain amount of impunity; in France, more

[1] It has always been maintained in Vienna that the Serbian question was far more "vital" for Austria than for Russia, and that the latter had long recognized this.

hypocrisy was necessary. Finally, for purely practical reasons, diplomatic in the case of France, and military in the case of Germany, it was an advantage to the latter to declare war, and to the former to have it declared on her. A matter of form, but very striking. These outward differences between the Governments often concealed analogous intentions, which were manifested according to their strength.[1]

Where Germany was Really to Blame.

Consequently, if we had to judge Germany by the law her rivals observed, we could but pronounce her innocent or guilty with them. There would be no difference in the nature of the crime, it would be merely a question of degree. But it is just for having adopted this ancient worship of Mars that we blame her more particularly. The circumstances which had made her the first Power in Europe *gave her power to determine the policy of the other nations to a great extent*, and, for this very reason, greater responsibility in organizing the civilized world. The concert of Powers had put up with the Bismarckian domination for a long time with quasi-satisfaction, because the old Chancellor had not abused his victory. If, in spite of her increased power, Germany had had the courage not to make its weight felt, and to bring a message of peace, Europe would perhaps in the long run have combined to follow her lead, instead of combining to destroy her.

Having thus failed in her rôle of guide, shaken peace by her vain threats, and done nothing to deprive her adversaries of the reasons for their Nationalistic agitations, Germany was very ill-equipped to throw the whole blame for the ruin caused by the war on to them. Her view of Allied responsibility, without prior recognition of her responsibility towards Europe, is nothing but propaganda.

[1] Russia's attitude in 1914, for instance, was very different to her attitude in 1909, on account of her recovery, and if we consider her armament programmes, the promises she made, and the future plans discussed at the Council of February 1914, we feel justified in thinking that the difference would have been still greater towards 1916, and that she would then have been openly aggressive.

To judge of its value, it is only necessary to note how cynically her diplomats talked, during the final crisis, of responsibility for the war, as though it were an attribute that could be "shifted" at will by a successful manœuvre; how they saw to "the distribution of rôles", as though it were really a question of a comedy: to see a Montgelas who, in 1919, went so far as to deny the very idea of responsibility, influenced by moral considerations, take it up again in 1923, in the interest of his campaign against the Allies, and then in his preface carefully avoid all endeavour to understand the question thoroughly; to note that the responsible leaders summoned to give evidence before the Reichstag did not attempt to justify their acts from the ethical point of view: relying on the moral standard of the period, they represented the complicity of 1914 as perfectly natural solidarity, imperatively demanded by the Treaties and the circumstances. Morality, which they swept aside as defendants, was only reintroduced into the discussion when it was a question of the adversary. That all pertains to polemics, and vanishes as soon as we rise above them.

Responsibility and the Versailles Treaty.

In reality, since 1870, Germany had been giving the world a shocking illustration of the success of might. Her prosperity inspired respect. Although she desired peace, she seemed to sing the praises of war by her mere existence: an example to all ambitions, a moral initiative to which her diplomatic initiative corresponded in the latter days of pre-war history. *The war was the outcome of a system of military alliances, and brought about by a sort of automatic process, in an era of materialism. But this pernicious atmosphere was created at a time when Germany's ascendancy was at its height, and the machinery was set in motion by one of the steps she took.* Therefore, she cannot gainsay the essence of the verdict given against her at Versailles. The Empire had not understood how to play its part for the general good; it was just that it should have fallen from its high estate.

And, moreover, the distinction between the two camps was very clear in 1919, if the survivors are taken into consideration rather than the authors of the war, and the nations, who were going to bear the burden of their responsibility, rather than the passing Governments. Of the original combatants, Austria-Hungary and Imperialist Russia having ceased to exist, there only remained, as opposed to Germany, Belgium, England, and France. The one had been neutral and invaded. Public opinion in the other two countries would not have sanctioned either a premeditated declaration of war, such as that of Austria on Serbia, or the refusal, even temporarily, of a conference, as in Germany. In 1905, a French Minister, who adopted this attitude, was obliged to resign. Our Government still carried on his tradition, but the people, who were opposed to war, had no idea that it might result from the Pan-Slav policy their leaders were endorsing, and this policy was condemned first and foremost by the judgment of the Russian revolution.

It might therefore seem right to make a distinction, in principle, between the combatants, at the end of the war, but its incorporation in the Peace Treaty was unquestionably *a grave political error.* The historical problem was too complex, the mistakes made by the Governments too divided for it to be possible to secure general acquiescence. Failing compulsory arbitration, there must necessarily be different opinions as to what are just peace conditions. Can a difference of opinion be abolished by a decree? Moreover, war, not being prohibited by international law, had never been treated as a penal offence, and, lastly, responsibility for all the great modern wars had clearly been divided.

These precedents ought to have been a warning against making an assertion, all the more vulnerable because it attributed sole and entire responsibility to one party. Now the Versailles verdict was so formulated that the smallest uncertainty would be sufficient to shake its authority. It could be ratified by Frenchmen conscious of having always wished for peace, but it could not be imposed on Germans, many of whom shared this wish. *It would consequently be easy for two different beliefs to be held in*

equally good faith. In Germany increased historical knowledge would work against peace and reparation. In France, the mistakes made would be systematically ignored, for fear of compromising the rights acquired. Was this harsh assertion the least necessary in order to establish our belief? By no means. It was only made after the armistice, and was of no use except to justify the demand for payment of the pensions due, an unprofitable and illegal claim, as we shall see, which has now been abandoned.

The obligation of paying for the damage to property was imposed on the Germans during the negotiations of October 1918, on the strength of a message from President Wilson,[1] who did not even make any allusion to responsibility for the war, and they accepted it of their own accord, because the devastations were a consequence of the violation of Belgian neutrality.[2] This infringement of international law, coupled with the immunity of German territory, and the ruin of French territory—to say nothing of the fact of the victory itself, which has always meant the loss of the war stakes to the vanquished—sufficiently justified the German debt. *The responsibility for damage is independent of responsibility for the war,* and must still be insisted upon, although the first idea has broken down. But apart from any question of penalties, could not the restoration of the devastated areas have been simply the object of a humane effort made jointly by the post-war democracies? The Socialists of all countries agreed that this was the right way to deal with the problem. It was President Wilson's idea as far back as when he promised Germany, before the armistice, that there should be no "punitive contributions".

The same principle was appealed to by General Dawes, in 1924, in the covering letter sent with his report: "The Committee", he wrote, "bases its plan upon those principles of justice, fairness, and mutual interest, in the supremacy of which not only the creditors of Germany, and Germany herself, but the world has a vital and enduring concern.

[1] 8th January, 1918.

[2] Bethmann-Hollweg himself had recognized, in August 1914, that this violation of international law must entail payment of reparation.

. . The recommendations of the Committee must consequently be considered, not as inflicting penalties, but as suggesting means for assisting the economic recovery of all the European peoples . . . since, as a result of the war, the creditors of Germany are paying taxation to the limit of their capacity, so also must Germany pay taxes, year after year, to the limit of her capacity". These are the principles on which the payment of reparation will at last be settled.

This moral obligation has never been disputed by Germany or by any Opposition Party in the allied countries. The quibbling has always been over Germany's capacity to pay, not over her duty. The reason there has been so much of it is partly because every gold mark our enemies paid out seemed to them like a fresh admission of a wrong they refused to recognize. The leaders—particularly in Bavaria—have always exhorted the people to combat the theory of German responsibility in order to save the dignity of the Reich. Paradoxically, it seemed to them to become an obligation of honour not to carry out the Treaty.

In reality, the victors could not be successful in their calculations except on the double condition of keeping up the historical hypothesis they had invented, by maintaining the strictest secrecy until it had done its work, and at the same time encouraging the "repentant" Germany they had seen in 1919, by offering her an equal place amongst the nations. But their project was incompatible, on the one hand, with the publication of the Russian archives, and on the other, with the Ruhr policy, and the Germans, driven back to Nationalism by the way in which they had been deceived over the peace terms, were very soon searching the documents that had been revealed for proofs of the Allies' guilt, with a discernment inspired by their distress. *It was then that the Utopian folly became apparent of basing the Treaty on principles which their conscience rebelled against, when it was one which could not be carried out merely by annexations and previous decisions, but depended chiefly for its execution on the industry of free individuals.*

The introduction of moral ideas into the Treaty, elaborated by one side, and capable of being exploited for

Imperialist ends, did not give it greater authority, it merely diminished its moral value. Moreover, the origin of the question of responsibility is in itself sufficient to show how it ought to have been turned to account after the war. Europe was organized in systems of defensive alliances: it was necessary, in order to bring them into play, to put the initial blame on the adversary. A mere question of dexterity. Therefore, it is not surprising that the allied theory should afterwards have been employed as a weapon of war, first to insure victory and then to justify it. But that public opinion should, for the first time, be responsible for a moral problem having arisen out of a war engendered, like all the preceding wars, by Imperialistic antagonisms, and that it should have survived the military success, is quite another matter. The fact that the victors refuse the honour of having found the opportunity for a victory, and say that the other side obliged them to fight, shows very clearly that the triumph of might is no longer sufficient to excuse it. *There is no doubt that nothing but the accepted version of the origins of the war stands between us and an irresistible pacifist movement.* This is one of the lessons we have already learnt from our study of the subject.

Lessons of the War. Anglo-Saxon Thesis.

It is from the point of view of *lessons*, that, since the war, many right-minded men and women, chiefly amongst our Anglo-Saxon friends, have abandoned the question of *responsibility*, merely trying to discover the best means of organizing the future by studying the past, and taking its lessons to heart.

To many of them, the dominant pre-war phenomenon *was the triumph in all the countries, of analogous psychological forces which* very much tied the hands of the Governments when the time came for a decision. How striking it is, they say, that the same characteristics should have been so universal during the crisis of July 1914. Everywhere, peace proved so fragile that war-like minorities were able to lead peoples into war who, had they been honestly consulted, would have voted against it. The

delicate manipulation of the alliances was left to a few statesmen who had lost the love of peace, or confidence in it; to a few warlike Ambassadors; to a few generals who only thought of victory. Grey, like Bethmann-Hollweg, was led in spite of himself. Tschirschky was a pendant to Isvolsky, Moltke to Hötzendorf and Janushkevitch. The monarchs made a vain effort to act together for a moment (telegram from the Kaiser to the Tsar, withdrawal of the order for general mobilization by Nicholas II, statements made by King George to Prince Henry of Prussia) and then yielded to the pressure of the military men and diplomats. The fear of isolation that existed everywhere led to greater efforts being made to cement the alliances. Bethmann-Hollweg's defence to the Reichstag was that "Austria might have found new friends", and Poincaré's to the French Chamber that "Russia would have broken off the alliance".

Political Morality Before the War.

The fact that these feelings had become so general must be regarded as chiefly due to the existing state of public opinion and political morality. *There was not the active fear of war in Europe which would have prevented the conflict.* If only men had been able to form an adequate idea of what it would be, all the problems would have been very much simplified. They would have given up appealing to racial solidarity to justify a Russian policy which must, sooner or later, throw their Slav brothers into opposite camps. Neither would they have appealed to economic necessities, for, in fighting for markets, Russia and Germany were going to sacrifice their economy itself. "Will" for hegemony would have ceased to exist, for, whatever the result of the struggle might be, there would be no hegemony in the end but that of the States which were spared. Nor would there have been any appeal even to patriotism. Does not the existence of a country depend more on its living sons than on its territories? Is it really aggrandized by exchanging an army for a province, by sacrificing fifteen hundred thousand lives for fifteen hundred

thousand natives of Alsace-Lorraine, and, in order to restore France territorially, first cutting off the pick of the nation?

To understand the state of mind in 1914, it is necessary to take into account the feebleness of imagination which could only conjure up visions of a rapid and decisive war—a crisis which would only temporarily interfere with the ordinary course of things; the weight of the past, which had handed down a tradition of a succession of wars and profitable victories; the prevailing scepticism, which scoffed at those who tried to build up a different future and substitute the ideal of a fresh and more stable peace for that of fresh and unnatural wars, which had ceased to be profitable: a peace in which the fighting instinct, that justified bygone wars, would be transformed into a spirit of competition, without being absorbed in the general ruin of war.

The European spirit of fatalism was leading the nations towards a *dénouement* which, as we have shown, was not the wish of any people, nor would it mean the triumph of any interest. Statesmen had come to believe that history consisted in the inevitable and periodical recurrence of war, and to make it their business to choose the most favourable moment for the conflict, instead of to preserve peace. The very conditions of the problem they consequently had to solve seemed to exclude the idea of subsequent responsibility. In reality, there was no fundamental difference between June and August 1914. *War and the menace and fear of war were not so much foreign to peace as its actual foundation.* The armed truce was full of unfought victories. Did not the German Army play its part in the Moroccan settlement, and the Russian Army in the Balkan settlement, without mobilization, and without fighting?

Diplomacy that relied too much on armed force could not guarantee peace permanently in any country, particularly in Germany. On each occasion of a crisis there was a risk of the Minister for Foreign Affairs giving in to the Ministers representing the fighting services.[1] Policy was

[1] From 1912 to 1914 important decisions of Imperial policy were taken against the Chancellor's advice: after the naval negotiations in 1912, he sent in his resignation; the Crown Prince writes that "the army estimates of 1913 were passed against his will".

influenced by might instead of by right. In order to induce the people to make the financial sacrifices demanded by the armaments programme, it had been necessary to excite national feeling to excess; then, outdoing in their turn the agitation which had brought them into being, the organizations formed called for war, as a mill calls for corn. Whatever compromise the diplomats suggested, the military authorities always offered the alternative of a victorious war. Under their influence, the discussions between the Chancelleries became very much like the operations which take place daily on the Stock Exchange. Success was risked for the sake of peace, but war was always held in reserve as a means of limiting the risks of the negotiations. If their failure became too evident, the course adopted was to break off *pourparlers* by appealing to arms.

Thus war, without being an aim, was at all events a possibility always open to the Governments, who risked or rejected it according to the estimate they formed of their chances. In carrying out the threat which had always been an essential element in the controversy, when they met with firm resistance, they were quite consistent; by refusing to do so, they would have sacrificed their prestige. In all the countries, opponents have thought they could prove criminal intentions on the part of their Governments by merely collecting statements showing firm determination, on the part of one or other of them, to go to war in certain circumstances. But this showed clearly that they themselves had never been in power. To represent the hypothesis of war as an entirely fresh element in the situation is to fall into the "capitalist" trap at once, by misunderstanding the whole character of the age. In reality, *educated opinion was such that the leading statesmen were far more afraid of being blamed for not having prepared for war than for not having done all that was possible to preserve peace.* And surely they were justified by the fact that, after the victory, amongst those responsible for the war, the only ones called to account were those who were also responsible for defeat.

In such an atmosphere of distrust and uncertainty, it would hardly have been possible to avert the catastrophe

unless each Government refrained, during a critical period, from any act which could in any way pre-determine the fortunes of the war. The moment the first steps were taken, the adversary would not hesitate to precipitate the crisis, for fear of losing the first battle. In reality, whilst diplomatic notes were being exchanged, and the usual courtesies still observed, military decisions were already foreshadowing the beginning of the struggle. Russia mobilizing alone meant the failure of Schlieffen's plan of campaign; Germany's getting any start would have jeopardized the battle of the Marne. In those decisive hours these considerations must have appealed to the diplomats far more than the attractions of a precarious peace. No doubt they still preferred it in theory; they thought of it as men think of rest, but, like them, postponing it until they had satisfied their ambitions. Not that they consciously wished for war. It was more a question of cherishing secret aspirations which were incompatible with the *status quo*. In some subtle way this influenced their acts and weighed down the scale when the moment came for the supreme decision. The excitement roused by the continued increase in armaments had also to be taken into account. The Governments were uneasy as regards their enemies, but confident of their own strength, and when they talked of peace, it was only to assign it ever narrower limits, within which it could not survive. They would accept nothing short of a peace consistent with "strength, honour and dignity" (*la force, l'honneur, et la dignité*) to quote Poincaré, or rather, they required it to be clothed in all the pomp and panoply of war (*pompeuse, magnifique, étincelante, et fière comme la guerre*), as Anatole France put it. Then, having preserved it with such difficulty in former crises, they began vaguely to wish for a time when problems too complex for them would be solved by force, when people's minds would be simpler in every country, criticism less severe, powers stronger, and the question of responsibility sunk in the outburst of patriotism; *psychologically, war seemed to them less difficult than peace, and they were prepared to plunge into it through weakness.*

It became possible from the day when they tacitly agreed to go to war, each bearing only part of the burden. During the twelve days, the war-brand was virtually passed from hand to hand, like the torch of old on its course, the nations, and even the parties, relieving one another, so that the sinister work of setting Europe on fire might proceed without delay. Russia made a conciliatory effort on the 26th, and Germany on the 29th. The Dual Alliance rejected the idea of a Conference, but the Dual Entente precipitated mobilization. In Germany, the diplomats were at the helm at first, but their policy brought about a period of tension in which the power passed gradually into the hands of the General Staff, and then, when they thought they were free to draw back, they suddenly found that military considerations were too strong for them. They had not realized in the beginning that they were steering towards a general war, and when this dawned upon them, they had already gone half-way, and were tempted to go on, just as anyone suffering from a mortal disease may feel it not worth while making any struggle to live. Finally, those who were undecided found plausible reasons for a belligerent attitude, such as the theory that to intimidate the enemy was a method of preserving peace, and even the diplomatic concessions with which they soothed their consciences, were only for the purpose of uniting the allies and parties, thus making war possible. Mars was a wily tempter, who led the responsible leaders towards the catastrophe by insensible degrees.

The Determinism of the Alliances.

A League of Nations could have arrested the conflict of 1914 by acting as a drag on the proceedings, making a delay between the diplomatic dispute and the military tension, which would have increased the chances of bringing about an understanding and, at all events, have shown who was to blame, but, in the atmosphere existing at that time, the constitution of such a body would have been unimaginable. The peoples had been led to look for security in the opposite direction—in a system of alliances *linked together like the*

parts in machinery, a perfect illustration of the prevalent fatalism. The Entente Powers had always refused to entertain either proposals to enter into private agreements, proposals of general arrangements between the enemy groups, or proposals of collective action irrespective of the alliances; we need only recall the proposal of an Anglo-German agreement with regard to the Bagdad railway, the Entente *à quatre* between Austria, Russia, France and Germany, suggested by Aehrenthal, joint Franco-German action in eastern affairs, suggested by Kiderlen, and the proposed Anglo-German naval agreement.[1] On all these occasions the liberty of each Power to negotiate was restricted by the alliances, which necessitated all the difficulties to be solved being dealt with simultaneously and indissolubly, thus diminishing the chances of agreement. Freed from the safeguard of the re-insurances, they were bound to tend towards war. It had only been possible to preserve these miraculous unions between former foes without war, for a time, by heavily mortgaging the future. By her complicity in 1914, when she was anxious to exert a pacifying influence without offending Austria, Germany was compensating for the pressure of 1913. Similarly, Russia had only been able to induce Serbia to agree to the Austrian demands by holding out, as the price of her temporary capitulation, a prospect of Austria-Hungary soon being dismembered.[2] Promises were made on all sides instead of concessions, and the peace thus established made war all the more certain. The only thing that stood in the way of its being started at once was anxiety to secure a strong enough combination of forces against the enemy. This is why Austria, backed by her

[1] At the time when the British Government were hesitating with regard to the German proposals, Poincaré, Isvolsky tells us, gave them to understand that their acceptance would put an end to England's entente with France.

[2] "Time is working for Serbia", Sazonov repeated, on the 23rd of April, in a despatch to Hartwig, "and for the destruction of her enemies, who are already showing evident signs of disintegration. . . . Serbia's promised land is situated in the territory of present-day Austria-Hungary, and not where the Bulgarians are". And Hartwig interpreted these instructions by suggesting a Serbo-Bulgarian agreement which was to be realized by respective annexation of Macedonia and Bosnia. Pashitch was able to say that "only the first round" had been won.

allies, adopted an intransigent attitude in February and October 1913, and relinquished her plan of action in July, when they deserted her ; this is why, inversely, the Franco-Russian policy varied according to the English attitude and the cohesion between the Triple Alliance Powers.[1] But it was an obstacle that would vanish directly the slightest mistake was made in appreciating it. In 1914, there was only the difference of a mistaken calculation between Bethmann-Hollweg's manœuvre and his previous reserve. If all the elements he counted on had come into play, Europe might yet have been saved—until the next crisis. But as each of the combatants believed in success, the tendency to war was stronger in both camps than the tendency to peace—Vienna triumphed over Berlin and Petersburg over London.

This was the moment when the military agreements were to determine the course of events. *Viewed from a certain angle, it was evident that the conflict between the enemy groups might be reduced to a struggle between numerical superiority and superior concentration.* The negotiators were secretly guided, throughout, by anxiety to make the most of their own advantage or neutralize the advantage the other side had over them. Knowing the character of the military organizations, it was easy to foresee that Russia would mobilize first, and that Belgian neutrality would be violated, both actions being indicative of a race for time. It might even have been anticipated that Austria would temporize, in accordance with the theory propounded by Hötzendorf as far back as in 1913 ; after coming to a vague agreement with Germany, it was everything to her to gain time, to allow the Russian mobilization to go on until its fan-like development on the two frontiers would in itself make Germany's co-operation a certainty.

Thus restricted on all sides, *the actors in the drama had not even the feeling that they were free agents, which might have been their condemnation.* To gloss over their impotence they expressed themselves as follows : " The machinery

[1] Vesnich, the Serbian Minister in Paris, added, in a telegram published by Bogitshevich, that the reason war did not break out in April 1913, was that they wanted to give the Balkan peoples time to re-organize and prepare " for eventualities that might happen in the near future ".

is working" (*La machine roule*), Pourtalès said, on the 28th of July. "Control has been lost", Bethmann-Hollweg, 30th of July. "No human will could now stand out against the automatic mechanism of the forces that have been let loose" (*il n'y a plus de volonté humaine qui puisse résister au mécanism automatique des forces déchainées*), Paléologue noted on the 27th, adding: "We diplomats have lost all control over events" (*nous autres diplomates, nous avons perdu toute action sur les evènements*). Bethmann-Hollweg wrote to Lichnowsky, but only after relations had been broken off, that Russia had "played with fire".

Some of the Allied leaders have themselves proclaimed that the idea of responsibility was a myth, while professing to adhere to the Government view. Lloyd George said that no head of a Government really wished for war, adding that they slid, or rather stumbled, into it. Haldane wrote that the war was "due not only to the failure of certain of the prominent men in the capitals to adhere to the principles which for a long time they had held fast, but also to the accidents of untoward circumstances, and the contingency that is inseparable from human affairs. . . . Up to the middle of 1913, the chances were in favour of peace". In a speech in 1916, President Wilson declared that "the war was not provoked by any isolated event", thorough examination showed that it was the result of "the whole European system". Similarly Briand said war was "not brought about by man's direct will, it was generated in a propitious atmosphere. Careless people filled a barrel with gunpowder, and placed in it a dangerous thoroughfare; it had only to be struck by a flash of lightning, and there would be an explosion".[1]

This is the theory most generally accepted now by all liberal minded opinion in Europe. Its partisans now call for the suppression of alliances, for the elaboration of an altogether fresh organization of international relations, as being the only possible salvation, *and their interpretation of history founds a policy which has a tendency to resemble that of the British Empire.* We shall have to examine these

[1] Speech at Nantes, the 3rd of June, 1922.

views in dealing with post-war events. For the moment, we should merely like to make two reservations to the account we have given of the past, which will enable us to explain its lessons better than would otherwise be possible.

Reservations: Two Moments when Responsibility was Incurred.

In the first place it must be remembered that *this description of Europe is only strictly correct as regards quite a short period.* To the best of our belief, up to 1912 European policy had no tendency so fixed as not to be susceptible of change. We shall be able to establish our argument if we go back to the beginning of the century, when there was a choice of alliances, and Europe had not yet settled down into solid antagonistic groups. Either the Anglo-Triple Entente or the Franco-Russo-German Alliance contemplated at that time could assuredly have guaranteed peace on the continent, if the interested States had been willing to limit their ambitions with that aim in view.

Again during the succeeding years, the political alarms were not quite as serious as historians sometimes represent them. They consisted chiefly in *Kriegspielen* (war games), which showed what the exact position would be in case of war, tested the statesmen's ideas by the military risks, and gave a certain air of reality to their Cabinet games. In some respects they were also like periodical and necessary crises in Europe, cutting short the long periods of calm in which problems awaiting solution rankle, and which may suddenly end in a dangerous explanation. But the danger became more serious in proportion to the development of national aspirations and armaments, whilst the Governments had less freedom of action as time went on. It became more and more evident that things could not go on as they were, and that a day of reckoning must come. In 1914 Germany's challenge was really a gamble, a toss up between peace and war, the act of a powerful nation, weary of negotiating, and trusting to luck.

But even so, failing the true peace which could only be the result of moral evolution, the skill of statesmen could still have kept up a provisional peace from day to day, which would have given the forces of progress opportunities, and might have lasted long enough to give it a permanent character. The situation was, as Sir Edward Grey said to the Austrian Ambassador at the beginning of the 1914 crisis, that "it took two to make peace" but it also "took two to make war". More correctly speaking, *the warlike forces were powerless in every country, unless the enemy's pacific spirit succumbed.* They could only fight in disguise—"fig leaves", to quote Jaurès—and a resolutely conciliatory policy would have obliged them to show themselves in their true colours.

Consequently, while recognizing the steadily increasing restriction of their liberty of action, we still maintain that on two occasions, in the course of this evolution, the Statesmen were to some extent responsible in different ways. In the first place, they were responsible for the choice of a political aim, for if a Government pursues an object which can only be achieved by war, its policy must inevitably come into constant conflict with that of the enemy, and engender the state of tension we have described, which the part played by chance increases. They were also responsible, *during that period, for the application of the alliances,* which multiplied or restricted the chances of conflict engendered by their opposite tendencies.

We are speaking here of *moral* responsibility incurred by men who had the good of their country at heart and whose only crime was not having had enough strength of mind to believe in peace and to sacrifice the interests of prestige for its sake. Defined in this way, without any penal element, it is right that the idea should be re-established: first in order that the younger generations of democratic Germany may learn to condemn and avoid the mistakes made by Imperial Germany; and also that having recognized those made by our own Governments, we may give up defending them by a sort of vague approval, and may bring about a reform of our foreign policy by our criticism of their acts.

French Policy.

On the French side, it was Delcassé's foolish policy that first tended towards war. He gave an anti-German turn to a sound policy of Mediterranean ententes, *which was quite unnecessary*. To negotiate the Moroccan question independently of Germany, purchase our protectorate from all the maritime Powers, affecting to ignore the one on whom we depended most, and systematically urge against her all the precedents of her former continental tradition, which her progress had outstripped, was equivalent to a refusal to recognize Germany's existence as a world Power, and must necessarily be felt as an insult by her. Moreover, it was pursuing an inconsistent aim, for this war policy was not backed up by preparation for war. It could consequently only lead to a humiliation, which is exactly what happened in 1905.

To expose a country to such blows is a strange way of defending its honour, and it was most unfortunate that France should only have reverted to a rational policy under foreign pressure, instead of acting on her own initiative; collaboration would have prevented the crisis, but the crisis prejudiced it. In spite of this, the Moroccan question was settled in 1911 without a war. But it had left peace weaker, and unequal to a fresh test. Now in 1912 France embarked on a warlike policy for the second time.

No doubt, in linking up the fate of Franco-German peace with Balkan intrigues and uncertainties, Poincaré could appeal to the principles laid down by his predecessors. Since 1899, the Franco-Russian Alliance had guaranteed the "maintenance of the balance of power" as well as defence against any aggression, and these words appeared again in the *communiqué* published the day after the Anglo-French interviews in the spring of 1914. Now in the 1899 agreement, a special point was made of one factor in the "balance of power": writing to Loubet on the 12th of May, 1899, Delcassé explained that the object in prolonging the agreement was that it should come into play in case of the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy:

"A dissolution", he wrote, "that may be desired, and might perhaps be furthered elsewhere, and from which others might anyhow wish to benefit. . . ." And, as far back as in 1892, Ribot wrote that "we should have no interest" in remaining neutral in case of an Austro-Russian war. To link up an alliance with maintenance of the balance of power, knowing that this is menaced by one's ally, is equivalent to choosing in advance to take part in a war one considers inevitable, it means accepting the obligation to fight without making it subject to moral conditions, and consequently relinquishing the right to raise a question of responsibility.

These dangerous tendencies had been counteracted, however, by a very pacific application of the alliance. The military convention, which might have set all Europe in a blaze on the smallest pretext, had lain dormant without there having been any statesman to emphasize its possibilities. *In* 1912, *things became more serious* when Poincaré tried to "turn the Austro-Russian rivalry to account to promote the Franco-Russian Alliance" (*nourrir l'alliance franco-russe par la rivalité austro-russe*), to quote Saint-Aulaire. Since 1899 there had been Morocco, the Entente Cordiale, the strategic railways, and the arrival in power of Isvolsky and Sazonov. The smallest thing now increased the alarm felt in Europe.

The fact that the man who initiated the Balkan policy of 1912 was also the one who took the eleventh hour responsibility whose nature we have pointed out, shows clearly the spirit in which it was conducted. On the 29th of July, 1914, Russia sounded France before carrying out her mobilization, and said that she would agree to whatever France and England proposed. If, as Caillaux points out in his memoir on the question of responsibility, the French Government had replied by a declaration of loyalty, not only to the alliance, but also to the Triple Entente and the spirit of peace to which all the inter-allied agreements referred; if they had respected the convention of 1892 and confirmed their undertaking to come to Russia's assistance in case of a German attack, asking her at the same time not to do anything to increase the probability

of this attack, and adding that the alliance would not come into play if the order of the mobilizations agreed upon were altered; if, without disavowing the patriotic hopes that might have been roused on both sides, they had fallen back on the necessity of securing British co-operation, to make more sure of victory; *if, more plainly, instead of advising the Russian Government to mobilize secretly, they had come to an understanding with London which would have enabled them to ask that all military measures directed against Germany should be suspended while efforts were still being made to mediate, then there would have been a good deal of chance of eliminating the three great factors of the war: the Russian menace, Austro-German solidarity, and England's hesitation.*

Democracy and Foreign Policy.

How was Poincaré's policy possible in France? It is quite evident that it was not formed *ex nihilo* by one man. In 1911, a wiser policy had only been pursued with great difficulty, for opposition increased during the last few weeks of the Franco-German *pourparlers*, threatening to prevent the signature of the agreement, and subsequently leading to strong hostility to its ratification being shown by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate. Jules Cambon, fighting for the cession of Morocco to France, wrote: "There are people in Paris who want us to lose the battle".

The nation certainly did not wish for war. *But the contradictory tendencies shown by public opinion might have favoured several policies, and this gave special importance to the rôle of interpreter, which should be filled by the Government.* Two courses were open to them. There was a latent desire for revenge in the country, but it could only be roused into activity by belief in a fresh German menace. The country would respond loyally to any call of that kind. *But the Government had it in their power to determine the course of public events by their secret procedure.* The policy of encirclement would provoke arrogant demonstrations of German strength which would serve as a pivot to the Nationalistic agitation. Hostility between the Governments would create the atmosphere of suspicion in which

it becomes easy to make the enemy's acts appear like aggression.

In this respect an ambitious man had an easy game, for in France *foreign policy had never been thoroughly imbued with the democratic spirit.* The Constitution itself had fixed limits in this domain : by the law of 1875 treaties of alliance are not submitted to Parliament for approval. And even other treaties can be withheld from it by adroit management : this is how it happened that the partition of Morocco between France and Spain was effected in 1903 in the form of a declaration signed by the Foreign Ministers, was not ratified by the King and the President of the Republic, and could be concealed from the Parliaments without illegality. It may be urged that the Chambers have at least the right to inquire into the secret treaties, in case of a declaration of war, before they lead to offensive action being taken, but that is an illusion. On the one hand, when the Government puts the case publicly before Parliament, it is almost always impossible to withdraw without dishonouring the country and discrediting it internationally. On the other, the declaration of war is—as we have seen—a simple formality, and it is easy to throw the onus of it on to the adversary, particularly if rapidity of movement is essential to the latter. When the 1914 Government tried to do this, it was chiefly with the object of eluding parliamentary control. They were struggling between an enemy at home and a foreign enemy. Isvolsky's telegrams show us Poincaré postponing French intervention, and then willing to be satisfied with the smallest pretext to justify it without declaring war, in order to avoid a debate on the terms of the alliance.

It may be urged that the steps taken by the Government with regard to the enemy are in reality almost always made public, and in this way subject to the control of public opinion, therefore they could not be taken in opposition to its tendencies. *But we have no reason to assume the existence of an independent public opinion, entirely distinct from that of the Government,* in the case of the special questions which are raised by every international controversy. It is surely far more the reflection of it ; in the

lower classes it is formed by the Press which the Government inspires, and in the educated classes by the elements with which it pleases to provide them, to guide their opinion. During the short pre-war period, it was led into being just as violently anti-English as anti-German, at intervals of a few years. Now in the course of this book, we have seen how constantly and tendenciously the truth was perverted in France, at this critical time. Had not the long support the Chambers gave Delcassé's policy shown clearly that the country could meekly endorse a policy for years, of whose consequences it would not approve? In reality, *the Government had power to commit the country to a course, and, in the hour of danger, the assemblies had no choice but to support them, for had they not done so, the consequences would have been very serious.*

From the time of its first establishment, the Third Republic had tried to remedy the position of inequality the provisions of its Constitution were thought to give it, as regards the monarchical Powers. If France had been quite faithful to the spirit of her system of government, she could only have given provisional undertakings, subject to Parliamentary amendments. But she did not hesitate to give herself the airs of a monarchy, to render alliance with her more desirable. On the 28th of August, 1890, Laboulaye, our Chargé d'Affaires in Petersburg, wrote: "We have an interest in not exposing the defect in our Constitution which has done away with the essential right of the head of the State to conclude treaties, and has consequently deprived our policy of the advantages of secrecy".[1] Two years later, when the Tsar strongly opposed the publication of the treaty of alliance, Ribot objected that it could not be kept secret indefinitely without infringing the prerogative of the French Parliament; but these reservations were purely verbal, and the treaty remained secret till the end of the war.

Thus the Republicans, installed in the place of the former dynasties, and having occasion to negotiate with their sister dynasties, carried on their political tradition as well. The inconsistency between the nation's democratic

[1] Yellow Book on the Franco-Russian Alliance.

tendencies and its system of government was unmistakable when Poincaré came into power. The latter, taking advantage of the circumstances, exercised his constitutional prerogatives to the utmost; through his personal influence on the Cabinet Ministers, through the greater authority the head of the executive assumes in periods of alarm, and through the sympathy between his political opinions and Lorraine descent and the Nationalist tendencies the younger generation in France were beginning to show. But instead of, like Grévy, throwing the whole weight of his position into the scale to increase the chances of European peace, he took advantage of it *to involve France in a definite course of action in which the power of her Parliament to take decisions became merely nominal. "Make a king, or make peace", Marcel Sembat wrote. The Republic waged war, but it had ceased to be altogether a Republic.*

The Russian Chimera.

No Machiavellian arguments, or proofs discovered on the enemy side, are required to show how this evolution came about. The break-up of the *status quo* in the Balkans in 1912, whose repercussions gave the impetus to the outbreak of world war, was due to Russia alone. No one was more explicit as to this than Poincaré himself. When someone replied in the Chamber that, in those circumstances, France ought not to have given her ally an assurance of solidarity, he defended himself by saying: "The alliance would have been definitely broken off". And similarly Viviani, trying to justify the attitude of his Government in view of the Russian mobilization in 1914, said: "It was essential to maintain the alliance as against a dislocation which would have isolated France". This was the central point of the debate. The responsible leaders accounted for all that took place by their relations with foreign countries, making no attempt to find other sufficient reasons. To give such an answer was equivalent to pleading guilty, and appealing to extenuating circumstances.

At all events, supposing we admit these excuses? If

what Poincaré said was true, we should have to ask how it was that those who professed to be most anxious to keep up France's dignity could approve of a policy which placed us in a position of such dependence on a foreign Government that we had no choice but to follow suit if they embarked on an offensive, and risk our fate as well. But who can say with any certainty that Russia would have broken off the alliance, that she would have remained passive had Germany attacked France, at a time when she was watching the European complications impatiently, hoping they would afford her an opportunity of making conquests? Having reverted to Slavophilism, she was the natural ally of all the adversaries of the Power in the ascendant in Constantinople. And this surely gave us some liberty of action.

It has been said that France's loyalty at least made it easier for her to exert a moderating influence on her ally than would have been possible without the friendship thus cemented. Romieu quotes as an instance the development of the Albanian affair.[1] But what do the documents really show us? Poincaré began by entirely supporting the Russian view; it was only after meeting with unexpected opposition from Italy that the two allies agreed to modify their attitude. Would not Imperialist Russia have been far more likely to learn wisdom if French military help had been refused? Sazonov said himself at the Ministerial Council of 1913 that France's co-operation was an indispensable prior condition for any Russian initiative; and on the 24th of July, 1914, he told the British Ambassador that Russia "would face all the risks of war, *if she felt sure of France's support*".[2]

The German Chimera.

Therefore France's dependence on Russia was voluntary. An attempt has been made to justify it by suggesting that we were faced by an irreconcilable and rapacious Germany, who would not have left us the choice between two policies. But that was a spectre conjured up by men

[1] Yellow Book and *Livre Noir*. [2] Blue Book, No. 17.

who had already resigned themselves to war, and whose only remaining concern was to prepare people's minds for it. They had gladly welcomed and magnified everything that could lend some air of reality to this fiction. "Agadir did us a very good turn" (*nous a rendu une immense service*), Poincaré said to Isvolsky. The Nationalists counted on provocation from Berlin in making their plans, and they were prepared to set traps to determine it.

No one dreams of denying that warlike influences were occasionally brought to bear on the Berlin Government, but however much they may sometimes have wished for war, it was only "*en soubresauts de volonté*",[1] as Caillaux truly expressed it, never deliberately or resolutely. *And whilst these attacks of military fever made it our duty to take special precautions, we still had opportunities for exerting a pacific influence in the intervals.* The military authorities were not in supreme command of the Empire, as was said. However disciplined German public opinion may have been, however great the strategic advantages of the operation, it was impossible for them to involve their country in a sudden and gratuitous offensive against France. And, in fact, they did not do so during the forty years in which they were sure of victory, any more than Tirpitz attacked the British Fleet at the time when, according to Churchill, it could have been destroyed in a night.

The German Imperialism, the people and Parliament of the Empire sanctioned, merely consisted in trying to exhaust the pacific possibilities of gaining an advantage, to push the diplomatic successes to the line of resistance of war, without any desire to overstep it. *Nothing but an exceptional opportunity would have enabled the military party to bring about the conflict with the quasi-unanimous approval of the nation.* They had this opportunity in 1914, when the Social Democrats, who stigmatized Austria's defiance as "wanton", on the 25th of July, rallied on the 3rd of August to the side of a "war of defence against the Slavs". But the pretexts the partisans of war appealed to, in order to draw the people into it, might have been shown up beforehand, they might have been deprived of them. There

[1] Caillaux, *Agadir.*

was every reason why we should do this, above all, the very reasons which inclined Germany towards war: the change in the balance of international power, to her disadvantage, and the growth of proletarian power amongst her people. The mere preservation of peace would have been a triumph for us.

The characters of the Kaiser and his Chancellor in themselves insured our being able to influence their policy. Both were essentially weak, the weakness and irresolution being disguised in the one case by violent but contradictory statements, in the other by an impenetrable reserve. Above all, their fear of war was a trump card in our game. It was manifested in a dramatic way by the distraction which drove the Kaiser at the last moment to exclaim that all was lost and exert himself to secure peace, to blame England and Austria in the same breath, to appeal to the Tsar again after having declared war on him, to pour forth imprecations, on the margin of the telegrams he received, like the roaring of a wild beast caught in a trap, which caused Bethmann-Hollweg's contradictory telegrams to Vienna and his lamentable confession of impotence at the Prussian Cabinet Council. It was certainly no question with them of a gay and light-hearted war. Yet these were the elements Allied propaganda wove into "a conspiracy which had been secretly, carefully, cleverly, and insidiously planned, down to the smallest details".[1] The Crown Prince wrote, with some sense of humour: "They paid us the compliment of believing in our belligerence rather than in our incompetence".

It was no doubt those at the head of affairs in Berlin who brought about the *opportunity* for the war. But it was not to them at all the realization of a plan of long standing. Can anyone really believe that if Germany was still pacific during the Balkan war of 1912, as Poincaré admits, it was "because she was not ready?" On the contrary, the relative value of the German Army steadily declined during the last few years before the war, and up to 1913, in the opinion of our greatest military experts,

[1] Speech made by Lloyd George, 1917. The expression "secret conspiracy" appears again in the memorandum presented by the Allied experts at Versailles.

Russia was not in a position to fight her with any chance of success.

In these circumstances, the continuance of peace guaranteed the possibility of negotiating with Germany. *The change which took place in Berlin during the last few months before the war was in response to a development of the Franco-Russian policy.* The active intervention of the Dual Alliance in the Balkans made it impossible to carry on the old Bismarckian tradition, which aimed at maintaining the equilibrium between Austria and Russia in the east through the medium of Germany. When he first took office, Bethmann-Hollweg had tried to revive this tradition, but by stirring up the Balkan conflict France and Russia obliged him to make a choice. At the same time, *the fear of encirclement was slowly wearing out the power of resistance in Germany which had held out for long against Austria's bellicose tendencies. In* 1914, *German public opinion was ripe, and the Vienna Government profited by the fact.*

The Choice Between Two Elements.

If the French policy of cementing the alliances had been pursued with pacific intentions, it would still have been remarkably stupid, for it led to a genuine belief in Berlin that the Fatherland was in danger; all the documents show this. *But the way in which it was carried out clearly indicated its character, for it was associated with a choice between the two elements which could claim to control the Entente policy—between Petersburg and London, between the war-like tendency and the pacific tendency.* In 1914, a Franco-Russian agreement was reached to draw England into war, not, as would have been possible, a Franco-English agreement to restrain Russia.

The alliance had been carried too far for Germany to remain indifferent to it, and the Entente not far enough to arrest its progress towards war; in this ill defined phase of its existence the policy of encirclement could not work as a peace factor.[1] Or rather, in 1914, the European

[1] "Everyone must feel who knows the facts", Winston Churchill wrote to Asquith on the 23rd of August, 1912, "that we have the obligations of an alliance without its advantages."

character of the dispute, the German provocation, and the defensive nature of the Franco-Russian policy, were not sufficiently evident for the Triple Entente to have been brought to the point of perfection in time.[1] In 1911, England had given Germany a public warning, through the medium of a speech made by Lloyd George. The warning was not renewed in 1914. Why? The British Government gives the answer in the Blue Book: "Nobody here feels that, in this dispute, so far as it has yet gone, British treaties or obligations are involved. Feeling here is quite different from what it was during the Morocco question. That crisis involved a dispute directly involving France, whereas in this case France is being drawn into a dispute which is not hers".[2]

If the French Government had chosen a resolutely defensive policy and waited for the conflict in the west, the first German menace would have enabled them to obtain a much more definite statement from Grey, for the latter would have been more sure of public opinion in his country, and would not have been afraid of encouraging the warlike elements amongst his allies, as was the case in 1914. *The inevitable result of Poincaré's policy was, as Renauld put it, that Russia intervened too soon, and England too late.*[3]

The Conditions of Victory.

Even from the realist point of view, from which alone it merits consideration, this policy was inherently dangerous, for it associated France with an anarchical State threatened with destruction in the turmoil of a war, and an insular State, detached from Europe, whose co-operation could only be passing. However much it might lead to victory, *it would still tend to renew the Franco-German tête-à-tête afterwards* and to revive the problem of French security under the same conditions, after useless sacrifices and temporary military domination. But did it assure us of victory? In reality, in spite of the particularly favourable

[1] Winston Churchill wrote again: "By the time we could speak decisive words of warning, the hour for words had certainly passed for ever".
[2] Blue Book, No. 116.
[3] Renauld, *Histoire de la Guerre.*

circumstances of 1914, we gained nothing by our original alliances but four years of sanguinary equality; it was unexpected co-operation that supplied the necessary reserves of men and money for the supreme offensive.[1]

But, above all, whatever the final outcome of the hostilities might be, the system of alliances had resulted in our having been faced with convergent menaces during the days of peace, from which definite conclusions could be drawn. The Franco-Russian military convention had involved a reversal of the German plan of campaign, and concentration against France had been substituted for the concentration against Russia which had been provided for from 1880 to 1894. Germany was so thoroughly convinced that France would be mixed up in any quarrel in which she was implicated that her first military operation would be to safeguard against her, as being the enemy she considered most certain, most permanent, and most vulnerable.[2] Although France must inevitably bear the heaviest burden in the conflict, she had so managed as to be inevitably involved in it. Whatever trouble Viviani may have taken, on the 31st of July, 1914, to make Schoen believe it, every one in Europe knew that France was no longer free to be "guided by her interests". In Delcassé's time, this policy had been inconsistent with our military resources, and had consequently driven us into diplomatic bankruptcy. Under Poincaré, it was coupled with indifferent preparation and an unfortunate doctrine of offensive action at any price, which was, as it were, incorporated in the alliance.[3]

These conditions condemned us, at the very least, to a long war, that is to say to sacrifices quite out of proportion to the advantages to be gained by victory. We were going

[1] As regards this, see Ribot's *Lettres à un ami*, and the appeal made by the three "Premiers" to President Wilson in 1918, published in *L'Europe Nouvelle* of the 9th of February, 1924.

[2] In July 1914, if France had agreed to remain neutral, Germany would have asked her to hand over Toul and Verdun, failing an English guarantee.

[3] *Vide* the Franco-Russian military negotiations. The report of one of the meetings of our Supreme Council of National Defence says: "M. Fallières, President of the Republic, is glad to note that the defensive projects which were equivalent to a confession of inferiority on our part have been abandoned. We are determined to march straight on the enemy, without any mental reservation. Taking the offensive, which suits the temperament of our soldiers, ought to assure us the victory".

to lose two Frenchmen for every German killed, and the problem of depopulation would consequently be aggravated. Thanks to our mistakes, we were going to lose the mines and industries in the north, from the beginning of the hostilities, and be condemned to purchase the means of carrying on the war from our allies, thus becoming financially dependent on them. The sum due to us from the vanquished enemy would serve to pay our foreign debts, if the diplomatic control exercised by our allies did not prevent our collecting it, and if the long war, exhausting our enemies' as well as our own resources, diminishing their capacity to pay whilst at the same time increasing the deficit on our side and weighing down the scale more heavily every day, did not end in making even the possibility of an indemnity out of the question. *The germ of all this, which surprised the French people after the war, was contained in the policy adopted.* It was his clear recognition of these dangers, which he foresaw both before and during the war, that made Caillaux's policy so consistent.

But the danger most to be feared was the one which would be engendered by the moral atmosphere of the war : the suppression of freedom of opinion, which was protected by the law, but banished from every-day life ; the tendency to regard a political doctrine as something sacred, thus relegating the spirit of criticism to enemies of the social order ; the scope for propaganda calling an unreal world into being. France would be incapable of establishing guarantees for peace because she had not learnt the lesson of the origins of the war. What victory meant was opening the inevitable negotiations with the enemy in an unhoped for position of relative strength.

But how were these negotiations to be conducted with the " eternal Germany " that had been conjured up in imagination ? It was in vain that our Ambassador in Berlin, Jules Cambon, warned the French Government, as far back as in 1913, that it was a mistake to suppose that the policy of the German Empire was unanimously supported, that its shortcomings were invariable and its acts premeditated. Divisions of opinion, hesitations, and goodwill on the side of the enemy had been systematically

denied. Were we going to feel sudden confidence in them, after the victory? No. The fresh possibilities would come into collision with a former distrust based on the theory of German responsibility. An effort would be made to justify a pre-war conception in concluding peace, and the united Germany represented by our propaganda would at last be created.

II

THE ABORTIVE PEACE

I

REPARATIONS AND SECURITY

The Armistice.

Many people consider that the extreme moderation of the terms of the armistice and its premature date were amongst the greatest mistakes made in settling up matters after the war. Is it necessary once more to remind our readers of the reasons for its conclusion? In Marshal Foch's opinion the war would have had to be carried on for "perhaps four or five months" longer, to insure complete victory, and the demands he drew up were "those whose execution we should have been in a position to enforce after the next operations".[1] It should be added that the conditions of the 11th of November, 1918, already went beyond the limits of President Wilson's points which had been the basis of the negotiations. It is said that Germany, conquered without being invaded, did not realize that she was beaten. But the blockade, the occupation, and her bankruptcy after the war brought this home to every household. If, as is the fact, her feeling of having been defeated did not coincide with our feeling of victory, it was because she had the memory of having held out successfully for four years, of having only succumbed after the intervention of an unforeseen party to the war, and of having been vanquished by a number of adversaries, when it appeared to her that the victory was being exploited by one alone. Nothing we could do would alter that. But it would probably be waste of time to enlarge on this subject, for nowadays very few serious thinkers believe that a military demonstration could have simplified the grave

[1] Letter from Mantoux to Colonel House of the 6th of July, 1920.

practical and psychological difficulties in the way of fixing the reparations. The occupation of the Ruhr has been a lesson as regards this.

The Versailles Treaty and Public Opinion.

Public opinion in the Allied countries, which demanded Utopian and unreasonable atonement, was a far greater psychological obstacle in 1918 than German opinion, at that time dejected, bewildered, and submissive. *By encouraging the anti-German propaganda, the heads of the Governments had deprived themselves, through their own doing, of power to negotiate with a free hand, and the result they achieved was a confession of their impotence.* In order to reach some solution on which they could agree, they adopted middle courses, which were often the worst, such as limiting the occupation to fifteen years, the period in which Germany would be harmless, and the payment of reparation to thirty years, but admitting the possibility of its being extended over a further period, and without fixing the amount to be paid within the time given—in other words, rendering execution of the Treaty practically indefinite and thus encouraging resistance. Finding it impossible to reconcile their domestic policies, they signed a compromise which did not settle very much, in the hope that the inevitable subsequent disillusionment would bring the peoples to reason. President Wilson explained to the American delegation, on the 3rd of June, 1919, that it was necessary, in his opinion, to get rid of the war atmosphere, in which everything was exaggerated. "If we can once get out of it", he said, "into calmer airs, it would be easier to come to satisfactory solutions".[1]

We have not yet reached this calmer atmosphere. The very nature of the fault the French find with the Treaty is sufficient proof of this. *What our country had to fear most from the Versailles Congress was that the concessions made by our allies would be dictated by opportunism rather than by a genuine intention of keeping their promises, and that a Treaty in which we had the most interest, but which could not*

[1] R. S. Baker, *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement.*

be carried out without the consent of all the parties to it, would remain a dead letter, through not having been based on the general interest. But this is not at all how most of the opponents of the Treaty regard it. Poincaré's attacks on Tardieu merely show regret that decisions were not taken which would have increased our differences with our allies. Supporters and opponents of Clemenceau have alike been faithful to the theories of the old policy, security by force, and keeping up antagonisms, they only quarrel with individuals, accusing this or that one of having made a bad bargain, and thinking that they would have been more successful themselves. This is what the arguments against the Treaty amounted to.[1]

The Rhine.

Yet it really seems that the French plenipotentiaries did all that it was possible to do without falling out with their allies. It had long been known that the Anglo-Saxon Powers were not willing to allow us to control the Rhine. The whole history of England warned us of that. As recently as in 1917, France had only been able to come to an understanding with Tsarist Russia as to the establishment of an autonomous State on the left bank of the Rhine, without her knowledge, and when Balfour heard of it, he publicly expressed strong disapproval of the plan. At the Conference, the contest began by Wilson and Lloyd George vetoing the French proposal of indefinite occupation. To defeat this plan—and also Bourgeois's League of Nations idea, which Lansing tells us seemed to the Americans like "a military coalition under a French General Staff"[2]—the Anglo-Saxon delegates offered us the dual guarantee pact. Clemenceau then proposed occupying territory as security,

[1] There is no difference to be made between the parties, as regards this, at all events in respect of the Rhinelands question. Franklin-Bouillon, Radical, and Alfred Thomas, Socialist, agreed with the Right in finding fault with Clemenceau's arrangement, and all, or almost all Frenchmen shared their illusions.

[2] This prejudice against the French League of Nations was increased, in the minds of our allies, by their knowledge of Clemenceau's ideas on the subject; it was due to his influence, Ribot tells us, that the Senate refused, during the war, to adopt a resolution in favour of the League of Nations.

on the ground of Germany's financial obligations, hoping to bring it about in this way, and to combine its advantages with those of the alliances. But this second effort was no more successful at first. On the 7th of April, Wilson said that the conference " had consisted of a series of attempts, chiefly made by France, to break up the initial arrangement concluded between the Allies and with Germany " ; he seriously contemplated withdrawing from the discussion, R. S. Baker tells us, and cabled for the *George Washington*. Finally, a compromise was agreed upon, the occupation being limited to fifteen years and a Rhinelands High Commission appointed.

The fact was that having firmly adhered to his 1918 principles until then, Wilson was obliged, on his return from America, to put forward special claims made by the United States, and to compromise in order to secure their acceptance. He secured Clemenceau's support in the negotiations with Japan, on behalf of the Monroe doctrine (which he succeeded in incorporating in the League of Nations) and against Italy—for he knew that he would not be able to carry his point with regard to Fiume without first securing a majority in the Council. But, in exchange, Clemenceau succeeded in getting him to withdraw his first opposition in the Sarre and Rhinelands questions. Taking advantage of Lloyd George's temporary absence, he and Wilson agreed on the principles of a Rhinelands decree which the English Premier ended by accepting on his return. But the contest did not end there. The concessions were considered inadequate on all sides. In June, General Mangin tried to get up a Separatist Movement in the Rhinelands, so as to secure on the spot what his Government had been refused at Versailles. The attempt opened the eyes of our allies to certain French secret designs, to the possible result of the solution that had been adopted, and led them to regret the concessions they had made.

The evolution in the same direction which led England and the victorious Allies to an attitude of quasi-neutrality, became evident even in the course of the Conference. When Lloyd George arrived in Paris, he was still in favour

of carrying on the war to the bitter end, and of a single command. But in the spring of 1919, the news from London showed him that his initial attitude no longer coincided with the trend of British public opinion, and he adapted himself to it with his habitual agility. On the other hand, during the last few weeks of the Conference, he was dominated by fear that Germany would refuse to sign the Treaty, and inclined, for that reason, to make considerable concessions to her. On the 29th of May, he demanded a revision of the arrangements already made, particularly as regards occupation of the Rhinelands. On the 1st of June, at a meeting of the Council of Four, he said that he ought to have made his protest sooner, but that he had not quite realized how strongly his colleagues felt on the subject, and he appealed to Hughes's opposition, in particular. He failed in his efforts to secure a revision, because Wilson, whose chief anxiety, at that time, was to arrive at a speedy conclusion and "have done with the war", was against him, but he succeeded in getting a declaration added to the Treaty, which provided for earlier evacuation, in case of Germany showing goodwill.

Reparation.

The same line was taken with regard to reparation. There is a wide-spread belief that in 1919 all our allies, and the Germans themselves, shared our illusions with regard to "capacity to pay". In reality that was only the case with the right wing of the English delegation (Cunliffe). The left wing (Keynes) estimated that the German debt ought not to be fixed at more than fifty milliards of gold marks. Bonar Law, although a Conservative, was of the same opinion, and, in spite of his electoral rhodomontades of the previous autumn, Lloyd George inclined more and more towards it the longer the Conference lasted. On the 2nd of June, he openly attacked the French scheme, proposing to substitute for it "a contract by which Germany would undertake to restore", or else to grant her a delay of three months, which would enable her to fix her own obligations. As to the American delegates, they were

always in favour of a "penalty", and if they fixed a sum for this which now seems too high, it must be remembered that it was purely a question of appearances, for the benefit of public opinion. Their plan depended on an economic arrangement to Germany's advantage, which she was not granted.

Moreover, the twenty-five milliard dollars stipulated fell into two parts. Only the first was to be transferred, the amount being furthermore very much reduced by the discount allowed; the second was to be "invested" in German industries, and gradually retired within a maximum period of thirty to sixty years. In addition to that the Experts did not conceal their real opinion, in their reports to the Council. Wilson had always maintained that Germany's payments ought not to be spread over more than one generation, that is to say, thirty years. Now the memorandum drawn up by Davis, the American delegate, on behalf of the "committee of three" and signed by Loucheur, the French delegate, assumed that during that period "Germany would be able to pay from ten to twenty milliard dollars". Even then the Experts looked upon this estimate of the possible payments as the practical aspect of their work, the "debt" constituting chiefly a decorative structure intended to be admired from outside by the general public. Finally, the hundred milliards Brockdorff-Rantzau offered were non-interest bearing milliards: that is to say, their present value was hypothetical, but certainly a great deal less, and probably not very different to what Germany proposed later on.

When the Allied Governments decided, for fear of being overthrown, to separate without fixing the German debt, but after having included pensions in it, that is to say having deliberately inflated it beyond the possibilities of payment, none of them expected the stipulations to be fulfilled. They solemnly and deliberately exchanged visionary schemes in the sight of the world. They admitted their inability to reconcile public opinion and reality. "Any figure that would not frighten the Germans", Lloyd George said on the 9th of June, "would be below the figure with which he and Clemenceau could face their peoples in the

present state of public opinion. Mr. Bonar Law, who was better in touch with British public opinion than he himself, was inclined to take the same view as the American delegates, but the moment any possible figure was mentioned, he began to shrink from it." [1] They thought the German debt would be reduced by force of circumstances, without their having to take the responsibility of it. In fact, a German failure was to be anticipated, in view of such a heavy burden, and failing that, another obstacle must arise, which the bad faith of our enemies prevented our seeing fully developed: "The British and the French admitted", Davis wrote in his memorandum of the 20th of March, "that they would no doubt within two or three years desire to have Germany's bill cut down considerably, because by that time their people would realize that Germany can only pay a heavy indemnity . . . by closing her markets to them and depriving them of their outlets.[2] The problem is therefore not so much what Germany can pay, as what the Allies can afford to have her pay".[3]

Inter-Allied Debts.

As far as the Inter-Allied debts are concerned, there was never the smallest hope of profitable negotiation on this subject during the Peace Conference. Klotz having requested on the 20th of February, that an Italian proposal in favour of distributing the total costs of the war between the Allies should be placed on the order of the day, received a letter from the United States Treasury, on the 8th of March, which stated that the Treasury "would oppose any discussion, at the Peace Conference or elsewhere, of a proposal or agreement having as its object either the cancellation, consolidation, or redistribution of foreign Governments' obligations to the United States".[4] In 1922, our creditors were not so uncompromising; the question was not ripe in 1919.

[1] One of the French negotiators of the Treaty said in the presence of the author of this book: "I could not tell the truth, they would have killed me".

[2] The last part of the sentence has been abbreviated, but without altering the sense of it.

[3] R. S. Baker, loc. cit.

[4] Klotz, *De la Guerre à la Paix*.

Hence it will be seen that, on many points, our delegates lacked, not the strength necessary to secure a good deal, but the far greater strength of mind needed to refrain from asking too much. In others, they were faced with such an irreducible opposition of interests that no practical settlement could have been reached at once. Above all, they were handicapped by all the weight of the past, for no compensation could seem to the general public sufficient as compared with the terrible ordeal of the war.

The Real Problem.

Where our delegates were more to blame was for having laid down principles which must very much increase the future difficulty of solving the serious economic and financial problems which were the first fruits of our victory.

Had they thoroughly faced the question, instead of being chiefly intent on crowning the policy of Franco-German antagonism that had been pursued, they would have seen from the first that it must be dealt with on a plane which would make it less entirely dependent on the German payments. The great mistake was in assuming that the problem of reconstruction was limited to reparation of the material damage done, without recognizing that the system of international trade was also seriously injured by the war, and must be restored. It ought also to have been evident that the payments could not be made on a large scale except at the expense of our industries and consequently would not be net profit; whereas the benefits accruing to French productive power from a period of peace, exchange stabilization, and normal relations, would increase our taxable wealth and, consequently, our resources. Finally, it was necessary to consider how the economic power we were going to reconstruct in the liberated regions could be utilized. Now that the damage done in the north has been repaired, we can produce far more than before the war, and our surplus for export has increased. This is particularly striking in the case of the metallurgical industries, which R. Pinot says, in a 1923 report, may come to depend on foreign markets for the disposal of 50 per cent. of their output. But if this result is achieved

only by a financial policy which leads to inflation or excessive taxation, we are fixing a heavy mortgage on our reconstructed industry, and may perhaps meet with the same fate as Germany, in a lesser degree. Reconstruction in France must go hand in hand with reconstruction in Europe, production with markets for the goods produced, or we risk there being no use for the instrument created, and suffering from unemployment, like England.

These are extreme possibilities. France will be able to steer a middle course through them, and such considerations could not justify the folly of rejecting reconstruction and reparation. They show us, however, that enriching France, which must be our aim, does not merely mean recovering the German debt, nor does the latter mean a simple transfer of capital to us. To solve a European financial problem (from which the French problem is inseparable) by a mere process of subtraction, without any attempt to organize and distribute a surplus, may be legitimate in arithmetic, but in political economy, it is a purely Utopian process.

The American delegates had quite understood that, and would have liked the past and future to be linked up, to have part of the profits realized by Germany in collaboration with the Allies, in Russia or elsewhere, earmarked for the devastated departments, thus providing both a stimulus to the payment of reparations and a means of paying them ; but the French preferred *to use the debt as a weapon* which would deprive *German economy* of all credit, and leave it, after a short period of artificial prosperity, without capital and without consumers, menaced with social and political troubles. " They always insisted ", R. S. Baker wrote, " on their profits being at the same time actual losses to Germany." This was why our delegates began by asking —unsuccessfully—that the costs of the war should form part of the German debt, and then urged that at least pensions should be added to the reparations. This was conceded, thanks to British support. The American experts could not understand our claiming this addition, which, as it would have no magic power to increase Germany's capacity to pay, must simply lead to a distribution of the payments

less favourable to France. Did they really think they could improve our financial prospects by this violation of the armistice for which Lamont tells us there was no legal justification? Assuredly not. Moreover, we know what Loucheur, who was specially commissioned to study the question, thought of Germany's capacity to pay. This attitude was combined with an endeavour to obtain security by weakening the enemy, and a desire for atonement which brings us back, for the first time, to the origins of the war.

Reparation of Damages.

As far as restoration of the devastated regions is concerned, it will be convenient to begin by remarking that this was not an arbitrary problem, that the French Government were free to fix its limits. *The idea itself of full compensation for the damage done was something quite new in history.* The Americans did not admit it after the War of Independence, and the French had at all events always refused to accept all its consequences. In 1792, a law had laid down the principle of national responsibility, but limiting its application, as regards damages, to those done by the enemy, as regards individuals, to the *sinistrés* (victims of devastation) who were in immediate want. In 1793, damages were provided for even in the case of devastation caused by the French Army, but a maximum limit was fixed. Is it necessary to add, moreover, that the ravages of war, and consequently the costs that had to be defrayed by the budget, were not in any way to be compared with what they became in the twentieth century? After the war of 1870, Thiers stood out firmly against the principle of compulsory State compensation. The law of the 6th of September, 1871, simply stated that a later law would " fix the sum the state of the public finances enabled the Treasury to allot to compensation ".

The statement explaining the laws of 1873 and 1874, which provided for compensation in cases of injury, pointed out clearly that the indemnities were only an act of grace, an exceptional measure, and could not be claimed as a right, or a debt due from the nation. On the 20th of

December, 1914, however, the French Government proclaimed the right to compensation, and embodied it in a bill of the 11th of May, 1915, but left it incomplete, as it could not be legally enforced, and it involved an obligation to reinvest the amount received in the property damaged; moreover, there was no question of full compensation. The preamble stated that it was not to the devastated departments that France owed compensation, but to herself. "France herself has been invaded, not merely her frontier departments." These reservations were forgotten or whittled down in the enthusiasm of 1919. In the bill that was passed, the principles of equality of persons and of restoration of property combined to bring the cost up to the maximum, without entirely satisfying either the one or the other. The economic reconstruction of France and restoration of the devastated regions to their exact former condition were treated as synonymous propositions, without taking into consideration the natural changes that had taken place. To effectuate it, the owners of property were given the full benefit of the rise in prices, whilst those who were owed money were not compensated for the depreciation in its value, a privilege being thus created in favour of one class of capital.

This privilege was accentuated by the institution of negotiable bonds, which enabled the *sinistrés* to profit by not reconstructing, and the transferees to combine the advantages of increased money values with those derived from more remunerative reinvestment of the proceeds. All this tended to produce over-development of industrial at the expense of agricultural resources. Finally, these gratuities were multiplied by the excessive demands made and their insufficient control, which led in certain cases to such extravagance that an amending law had to be passed in 1924. In reality, how was the problem regarded? If the principle of 1915 was to be faithfully applied, the rôle of the State would be confined to insuring the devastated regions being set going, economically, so that the country might recover its vigour, and the expense would then have been considerably limited. If, on the contrary, anxiety to do justice was the chief consideration, it could not be

satisfied by merely passing a law providing for reparation of the damages, without regard to its repercussions.

From an absolute point of view, to regard those injured by devastation as the sole victims of the war, and compensate them alone, was to establish inequality from the first. To prevent its becoming flagrant, *it was essential at least to fix the compensation in actual proportion to Germany's payments*, to earmark for these extra expenses either a sum corresponding to the annuities actually paid, or the interest on an International loan guaranteed by Germany, so that the French people, as a whole, would not have to add the sacrifices necessary to make up the difference between the debt and the payments, to the losses entailed by the war. The balance sheet of the history of reconstruction from 1919 to 1924 will show this result, however: the whole country will have paid so that part of the country might be restored to its former prosperity. There has been a great deal of talk about foreign policy, international loans, etc., but we have had nothing but worthless promises, extorted by threats, to balance the budget of "recoverable" expenditure, and when we come down to hard facts, we find that all that has been achieved is a transfer of wealth from the south to the north of France.

The Policy of Reconstruction.

In the natural course of things, we had to fall back in the end on the sound economic principles which ought to have governed the organization of reconstruction. We began by embarking on a policy of "work in open order" which must lead to "beginning everything and finishing nothing". Hence, wild competition for higher wages and profits as a result of increased demand.[1] These disadvantages were at the same time aggravated by a narrow policy of protection for home labour—which did not have the effect of diminishing unemployment, for that was non-existent, it merely had the effect of taking the workmen away from their natural occupation, and of leading to a bad distribution of labour and to overpayment—and by

[1] See Parliamentary reports.

the formation of consortiums of contractors, who monopolized the work of reconstruction, and charged very much higher prices in the devastated regions than the world prices. It was not until 1921 that the necessity of " classifying the works generally, in order of urgency ", as recommended by d'Aubigny, was realized, that is to say, " getting rid, to some extent, of the prejudice of an ideal equality ", and on the other hand establishing a system of freer competition and lower average prices.

No doubt it is useless to criticize this policy, or rather lack of policy, in the matter of reconstruction, from a theoretical point of view, now. And it is easy enough to reply that the money squandered was a premium paid to the most competent, in the interest of rapid reconstruction, that the fortunes made were turned into instruments of production by which France will benefit in European competition, or into French taxable capital, which will increase her contributive power. But at all events, there is very little to be said for a foreign policy which neglected to co-ordinate reparations and reconstruction.

German Offer of Labour.

The relationship between the two problems was different at different times, and the statesmen ought to have made it their business to shape their reparation policy according to the occasional possibilities, taking advantage sometimes of one sometimes of another of the methods of payment. Immediately after the Versailles Treaty, when reconstruction had hardly begun, it would have been possible to employ a considerable amount of German labour. It is true that there were two objections to payment in labour: how to induce the inhabitants of the devastated regions to consent to the presence amongst them of the enemy of yesterday, and how to arrange for the payment of the workmen? The sentimental argument did not originate in the liberated regions. Reparation by the one who has done the damage is clearly in the nature of a moral obligation, and the people themselves made no objection to it in principle. The repugnance shown to it on patriotic grounds

was more a suggestion that came from Paris, as is often the case, or sporadic feeling generalized by the Government. However much it may seem to have been naturally expressed in the Somme, where a plebiscite was organized in 1921 on this question, it was only by a small majority (52 per cent.) and after a first vote had been given in favour of the proposal, followed by "vigorous prefectoral pressure".[1] It was easy to contrast others with this spurious manifestation, notably that of the Congress organized by the Office of Public Works and Buildings, which passed a resolution, in June 1922, in favour of importing German labour. Moreover, all the objections could have been got over by good management. By distributing the workmen in certain sectors, and at the same time keeping them away from large towns, handing them over the "deserted" zones, to begin with, and absolutely separating them, in the country districts, from the inhabitants, it would have been easy to avoid any appearance of immigration, and make the temporary character of the German collaboration clear. We may add that there was no question of competition with French labour, for this was insufficient for the work of reconstruction. On the contrary, the arrival of skilled workmen would have provided work for the labouring class. According to Reibel, there was a shortage of 320,000 skilled workmen in the building industry, in February 1922. The German labour rejected was replaced by other foreign labour, the only difference being that the reconstruction was disconnected from reparation and was done more expensively.

For all these reasons, we may be sure that, in the absence of propaganda against it, the obvious advantages of direct reparation would have appealed to the good sense of the French people, and that if the Government had been in favour of it, the country would have welcomed it gladly, as a tangible result of the victory. Nor is the practical argument unanswerable. It was said that the wages could only be paid in francs, and that this would amount either to France making an advance to Germany, which would only carry the problem forward, or to the acquisition by

[1] Macdonald, *Reconstruction in France*.

Germany of foreign currency, that is, to payment in cash with all its disastrous consequences. It may be remarked that, even if the cheap labour were at France's expense, it would be a saving, by doing away with the necessity for paying the higher wages due to shortage of labour, and thus diminishing the amount which must, in the long run, be contributed by the French taxpayer, if Germany failed to pay her debt in full.

But, in 1919, when the mark was still worth a quarter of its pre-war value, the question of exchange was not as acute as it became later on for other reasons ; and, besides, it would not have been impossible to get over the difficulty, at all events to some extent. Most of the foreign workmen in France only spend a small part of their wages, and send all the rest home. This surplus might have been paid direct to the families of the men in marks by the German Government, only their board and lodging being guaranteed in francs, and it might even have been possible to arrange to import food supplies from Germany into France. Once started, this system must have had a two-fold advantage : (1) It would have introduced a new method of paying reparations ; (2) it ensured the carrying out of reconstruction at a reasonable gold price level, since the internal purchasing power of the mark exceeded its external value, a condition favourable both to Germany and France,[1] to say nothing of the additional benefit which would accrue from the mere fact of the reconstruction being more rapidly completed. But the possible rivalry between Germans, interested in working economically, in order to reduce their debt, and Frenchmen, interested in over-estimating their expenses, in order to swell the amount due to them for reparation, was exactly what was feared. Suppose the Germans had claimed that the cost of the works entrusted to them should form the basis for calculating their total liability ? There was a risk of their example being a reflection on the French extravagance.

The Versailles Treaty did not provide for direct reparation. But immediately after its signature, in July 1919,

[1] French industrialists took advantage of this discrepancy to secure coal cheap ; the *sinistrés* (victims of devastation) ought to have benefited by it, too.

Germany made verbal proposals to that effect,[1] which France did not follow up, in spite of her approval of the principle. In July 1920, at the Spa Conference, the Berlin Government submitted proposals in writing. "Germany", they said, "strongly recommends this question being reconsidered, in the common interest"; and, as France seemed to be deterred by fear of a Franco-German *tête-à-tête*, they suggested the formation of an International syndicate for the reconstruction of the *Nord* province. In December 1920, Bergmann repeated in Brussels that Germany was willing to take direct part in the work of reconstruction, and Simons renewed the assurance in London in March 1921.

On the 23rd of April, fresh concrete proposals were formulated in a Note. Germany offered to be responsible for the reconstruction of certain zones of the devastated regions at her own expense, suggesting, in particular, the delivery of 25,000 wooden houses,[2] said that she was willing to consider any other proposal made by the Allies with the same object, and asked that the necessary negotiations might be opened as soon as possible. During the first two years after the war, Germany, *who was anxious to substitute payment in labour for payment in cash*, as being less disastrous for her, waited in vain for the order she had tried to secure from the victor. France even went so far as to formally reject a definite proposal to reconstruct the Chaulnes-Péronne region, and, instead of repairing the ruin they had caused, the German working men erected, for the benefit of the Ruhr magnates, the formidable constructions which must enable them to compete with our revived industries. At the end of 1922, the German exchange having collapsed, and the reconstruction having almost been completed, there was no further question of reparation being paid in labour.

Payment in Kind.

The same period had afforded us favourable opportunities for arranging to be paid in kind. Moreover, the

[1] Germany proposed to do the work of clearing away the débris, replacing railway lines, repairing the coal mines, etc.

[2] The German White Book states that only 101 were ordered by France.

two questions were connected: solving the second would be indirectly solving the first, by disposing of its complications. For instance, if the work had first been standardized, German labour could have been employed in producing the materials for delivery, and the actual presence of German working men would only have been necessary for assembling them. Assuredly, the substitution of payment in goods for payment in cash would not have solved all our difficulties. The system involved arrangements being made for exportation of an artificial character, which must disorganize the economy of both countries, hand over Germany's wealth to a foreign creditor without ameliorating her balance, and increase her budget deficit. It tended, like transfers in cash, to depress the mark exchange, if not by creating a similar abnormal demand for foreign currency, at all events by accelerating inflation, but it would have led far less rapidly to disaster, for it had, on the other hand, the advantage of disposing of the difficult problem of international transfers, and of creating, in certain circumstances, a useful market for the debtor nation's industries. In short, by making more point of reparation in kind than in cash, we might at least have been able to gain rather more time, even if we could not have averted the financial disaster which must have followed the Treaty, and we could have profited by the delay to get the greater part of the work of reconstruction done by Germany. But it was just during this time that reparation in kind was systematically ignored. The Treaty did not provide for German deliveries outside the liberated regions, and this omission was only repaired by the London agreement.[1] As regards the *sinistrés* themselves, the procedure it organized was slow, complicated, and bureaucratic, and in practice, was not resorted to. This is how the paradoxes of the years 1919 to 1921 became possible. During that period, according to Eymond's report, whilst the value of the deliveries representing reparation was hardly nine million, the value of the contracts placed in Germany for French industry reached the figure of two and a half milliard gold marks.

[1] The Le Troqueur plan, to enable this agreement to be carried out, had not come into force when the Ruhr was occupied.

It was only in October 1921 that the Wiesbaden agreement (subsequently modified by the Gillet-Ruppel agreement), seemed really to open up an era of reparation in kind. Its signatories, Loucheur and Rathenau, had intended that it should come into force without delay, by decree, but Poincaré's Government at first thought it better that it should be submitted to Parliament, and only changed their minds in July 1922. Thus, nine months—of what happened to be a propitious period—were again lost, Lastly, the putting into force itself was purely theoretical. According to the agreement signed, our Allies were entitled to deliveries to the value of five hundred million in 1922. and the actual value of what they had was four hundred and sixty-nine millions, whilst France, who was entitled to demand nine hundred and fifty millions' worth of goods, only had two hundred and seventy-three millions' worth, of which one hundred and sixty-three represented "automatic" deliveries of coal provided for by the Versailles Treaty. Consequently, France only took advantage of the Wiesbaden agreement that year to the extent of giving a ridiculous order for one hundred and ten millions' worth of goods.

This was originally due to the hostility shown by French industry. The Chambers of Commerce had condemned the Wiesbaden agreement by a large majority, and Reibel, the Minister for the liberated regions, who had pronounced in favour of the principle of payment in kind, was, to use his own expression, "taken to task" by the producers. *He either could not, or would not, overcome their opposition* [1] *and chose the easy course of nominally agreeing to the Franco-German agreements without creating the conditions which alone could insure their being carried out.* It was not sufficient for the agreements to exist on paper. They could only come into force if they corresponded with the interest both of the French *sinistrés* and the German producers. It was essential that the former should be able to buy cheaper than they could buy in the world market, and that the

[1] No doubt it was contrary to some legitimate French interests. But these could have been satisfied as far as possible by imposing a certain limit to German importation, whilst reserving the right to fix the prices.

latter should be able to sell at a higher price than they could obtain in Germany. Failing this, it was evident that the one would prefer to sell at home, and the other to buy elsewhere. This means that the debit and credit need not necessarily agree, and even that it would not be possible for them to do so, if equality were established between the prices paid in Germany and those of the world markets. This was a contingency that had to be reckoned with in case of deflation or stabilization, or even of extreme inflation, and it was, in fact, what eventually occurred. There was consequently an exchange risk that private individuals did not care to face. The Government ought to have assumed it by announcing that, in case of need, they would be prepared to deduct a higher sum from the reparation debt than the actual value of the deliveries received by the *sinistrés*. In reality the risk they would have run was purely theoretical. No one honestly believed that Germany could pay the debt fixed by the Reparation Commission in full. There was certainly no risk of exhausting it too soon by over-estimating the payments; on the contrary, as they hesitated to make any formal reduction in the debt, for fear of public opinion, they might have thought it would have the advantage of giving the latter the pleasing impression that Germany was paying it. Anyhow, this was the course adopted by Italy, Jugo-Slavia, and Roumania, who benefited considerably by reparation in kind by giving orders at high prices. But the French Government were afraid of losing the smallest iota of their written rights, and preferred to let the whole system lie dormant. *This policy with regard to reparations in kind was the faithful reflection of a general policy which preferred keeping up a fictitious debt to receiving moderate payments; and similar considerations were responsible for the rejection of German labour as too cheap, and German materials as too dear.*

The question of prices depended, moreover, on a question of customs. The protection demanded by French industrialists had its counterpart in the tax on exportation from Germany, which varied according to the rate of exchange and was imposed in order to prevent Germany from being " emptied " of all her goods by owners of money of higher

value. This double protectionist barrier contributed very much to the delay in finding practical solutions, by doing away with the advantage of the difference in price, and entailing a risk of loss for both parties, even while inflation was continuing. But the question was on the point of being solved by reciprocal concessions (lower French customs duties in return for abolition of the German exportation tax) when the occupation of the Ruhr supervened. The recourse to force interrupted the negotiations men of energy had been carrying on for some weeks past, hampered by all these difficulties, and by very unfavourable financial circumstances, but profiting by the unemployment which was beginning in Germany and was encouraging German industrial owners to turn their attention to the markets of the devastated regions. An important contract had been signed in September between Lubersac and Stinnes; it was to have been followed by others, but these transactions were brought to an end, so that we "might at last be paid".[1] This is how reparation in kind, after having been shelved from 1919 to 1921, was paralysed from 1921 to 1924. The Wiesbaden agreement only provided for payment in kind until 1926.

Payment in Cash.

Let us now come to the question of reparation in cash. The general conditions of payment of an indemnity have long been familiar to economists, although they still create a sensation when they are explained in Parliament. A striking illustration of this is supplied by the history of the five milliards paid in 1871, of which we will only briefly recall the essential features. A small portion of the French debt (five hundred million francs) was paid in specie, and the rest in foreign securities obtained by the issue of loans guaranteed by the French Government, of which two-fifths were placed outside France, notably in Germany, and a further two-fifths were exchanged against the assets which individual French subjects held abroad.

[1] In return, the occupation of the Ruhr enabled the timber merchants to double their prices, no longer having German competition to fear.

The period covered by the payments coincided with a period in which France had a favourable trade balance, in spite of a slight increase in her imports, that is to say, a period in which her exports increased considerably; with a policy of loans, issued not only to meet the requirements of the indemnity, but even for domestic requirements in addition; and finally with a failure to balance the budget which could be tolerated because of the short time the payments covered. Now let us apply these lessons to our study of the German situation. At the time of the Treaty, the Reichsbank supply of gold was far smaller, in proportion to what was necessary to secure the payments, than the amount held by the *Banque de France* in 1871; Germany had no debts owing to her from foreign countries that she could make over at once; her trade balance was unfavourable, and the diminished purchasing power of foreign countries after a general war made it far more difficult to increase her exports than after a localized war; and, in addition, her budget was burdened by the material weight of a revolution, of economic exhaustion and disorganization quite out of proportion to those of 1871, and the moral weight of an indefinite and unlimited obligation. It was thus clear that, before any considerable payments could be thought of, two problems must be solved by giving Germany a period of grace, fixing her total liability, and judiciously remitting some of her burden. The first was the budgetary problem, i.e. the obtaining of the necessary funds, and the second the transfer problem, i.e. the creation of an export balance. And the only way for France to balance her reconstruction expenses at once was *to compel Germany to resort to the only one of the courses adopted in* 1871 *which would be temporarily of use, and issue an international loan based on reasonable hope of subsequent payments.* But there was never at any time any possibility of issuing the bonds provided by the Treaty and by the London Agreement, and they reposed in the coffers of the Reparation Commission.

In June 1922 the question was investigated in a really practical way for the first time by the Bankers' Committee. *This date marks one of the great turning-points in the history*

of reparations. At that time the Allies were still united, the mark had been steady for six months, and Germany was prepared to put her finances on a sound footing before coming to grief altogether. Further, as the report of the Committee said, "the purely financial conditions were distinctly favourable to the issue of international loans, more so even than at any time since the war". The bankers replied very plainly to the questions put to them, by advising against a limited loan—which could only secure Germany a "short respite", and would leave the general question of reparations to be dealt with under the same conditions, the security having meanwhile depreciated—and by imposing two prior conditions on the more extensive loan which seemed to them the only one advisable: an effort on the part of Germany to put her finances on a sound basis, and a reduction of the debt. Now the first condition was dependent on the second, and the whole problem consequently hung entirely on France's refusal or consent. It was the moment a courageous Government would have chosen for settling the question, by giving public opinion the necessary explanations and making the necessary admissions. But such a Government did not exist in France. A refusal from Poincaré put a stop to the work of the Bankers' Committee, and definitely precipitated the fall of the mark. In 1924 the question of an international loan was very properly revived—for there was no other solution—but under far less favourable conditions, Germany's capacity to pay being diminished, America more sceptical, and the English financial market less propitious. Once more, the psychological moment had been missed.

Co-operation of German Industrialists.

Is it necessary to mention, in addition to these possible solutions, the proposal that the German industrial owners should guarantee the payments? This scheme has been the subject of several brilliant and quite illusory reports. According to Paul Reynaud, it would be the best solution of the question of reparation, and even of the question of

security. But in the first place, however optimistic one's estimates may be, what would be gained by this means would be quite insufficient to constitute a solution of the general problem of reparation, and would leave it still existing. The technical difficulties in the way of carrying it out—increased capital, the consent of foreign shareholders, the fate of foreign undertakings affiliated to theirs, regard for German legislation—make it even doubtful whether it would be possible. But, above all, supposing that it were, it would probably merely be deceiving the French people, for our enemies would very soon find means of keeping the management of the business in their own hands, whilst profiting by the fresh shareholders—as the German holders of " preference shares " have done already, at the expense of their fellow countrymen. To suppose that profits can be made under compulsion, and that an economic agreement can produce good results in an atmosphere of political disagreement, would be to persist in the fundamental *naïveté* which was the ruin of our policy; whilst to look to such a system for security would be a still more serious mistake, since, as Herriot pointed out, anxiety to free themselves from a foreign mortgage of a political character would be more likely to act on the Germans as an incentive to war.

It is none the less true that, on the one hand, the burden of reparation must weigh heavily on German industry, owing to the taxation it will pay, and the guarantee it will afford, as estimated by the German proposals of 1923 and the Experts' report, and that, on the other hand, German and French producers have complementary interests, that it is essential for them to combine, and that their doing so will make both for profit and for peace. *The mistake has been in proposing to combine private and political interests, and to solve the question of reparation by introducing an alien element into German economy. To be durable, this fusion must have been preceded by a rapprochement between the two nations, and all the necessary moral conditions for this were lacking.* The general problem is now in a fair way to be solved. An agreement has still to be reached with regard to iron ore and coke. A favourable opportunity

occurred for this after the cessation of passive resistance in the Ruhr, when Germany had reached the last stage of exhaustion, and the industrialists, eager for capital, were inclined to give us more advantageous terms. But so far, this opportunity has also been allowed to slide.

External Difficulties.

Throughout the history of the reparations, the excuse made by the French Government has been the want of harmony in Europe, and their case amounts in a general way to one long complaint of our Allies' desertion of us and Germany's bad faith. These difficulties must not be ignored. But there is something unmanly, unworthy of the country that won the war, in restricting the explanation of its discomfiture to these obstacles. There is nothing to be gained by complaining; we must look upon the feelings of other nations as facts, and consider what means we have of working upon them. If we are likely to encounter insuperable obstacles, it is better to recognize them at once, and shape our policy accordingly, instead of weakening it by vain efforts to achieve the impossible.

England's Position.

As far as England is concerned, it is quite evident that in disturbing trade and establishing inequality in Europe, we were running counter to her unalterable interests, and that it would be perfectly useless to hope for her approval in those circumstances. The Conservatives being the natural protectors of the Entente, the anti-French re-action in England was bound to work against them, and it would have been sufficient to turn the country towards the Left, even if purely domestic causes had not worked in the same direction. The comparative chances of the Liberals and the Labour Party might be a matter of opinion, but the question was of very little interest from our point of view, since their foreign policy was the same: in any case, the future was certainly in the hands of opponents of the National *bloc*. The Conservatives themselves, over whom the national instinct resumed its sway, were gradually

adopting the theories of their Parliamentary opponents; in 1923, the Parties feigned to be still at variance, but in reality there was only one opinion in England as regards the Franco-German problem. From our point of view, moreover, it was to be hoped that the day would soon come when this evolution would be accomplished and we should know exactly where we stood. The circumstance of a Coalition Government, and then a Conservative Government, having been in power from 1919 to 1923 had only served to raise false hopes in France, to give an element of uncertainty to England's policy, and cripple its conciliatory action. *It was desirable that the Radicals should come into power, not only because they represented the real feeling in England more faithfully at that particular time, and it would consequently be possible to come to a more stable agreement with them, but also because they would give France's true interests a better chance, in spite of appearances.*

The fact is that the Conservatives had become entangled in an illogical policy, which consisted in claiming payment of the German and French debts and at the same time giving in to public opinion in the country, which favoured the position of ally being changed into that of arbiter and a return to the *paix blanche* of Grey's dreams, when the benefits of a revival of trade would more than compensate for the sacrifice of the claims abandoned. In this way, they opposed a triple obstacle to the settlement of the Reparation question: first by objecting to measures of control and coercion—just as the Liberal and Labour Parties would have done—then by professing to agree to measures they neither wished should be carried out nor thought likely to be successful, for the sake of preserving the Entente, and thirdly, by insisting on payment of the Inter-Allied debts, and thus preventing the amount of the German debt being fixed—at all events during the first few years.[1] It was to our interest to conclude an honest agreement on the basis of some such figures as those given by Keynes, to be carried out by methods similar to those suggested by

[1] The Conservatives must also be debited with their Oriental policy, which sensibly contributed to weaken the Entente, and was opposed by the Liberal and Labour Parties.

McKenna, rather than submit to the continuance of a hypocritical policy. But these were just the two men most violently attacked in France until the time came when we asked for the adoption of Keynes's solution, though without much hope of obtaining the same terms, after so much delay, and welcomed McKenna's appointment to preside over one of the Expert Committees which were going to solve the problem. We shall see that the Entente was only restored in 1924, when those who had been so generally denounced as the " enemies of France " were in power, for they alone provided solid bases for its existence.

Germany's " Bad Faith ".

As to Germany's " bad faith ", was there really anyone who could believe that our enemies would ever consent to make the sacrifices which would have been necessary to carry out the Treaty in full, without even any hope of being successful, while there was any alternative at all? And does anyone believe that they would have been made? The author, for his part, has found all the Germans with whom he has been able to talk privately and freely, disposed to admit that political obstacles contributed even more to the non-fulfilment of the Treaty than financial obstacles. Consequently no one disputes Germany's " ill will ". Only this vague term needs definition. It must not be forgotten : 1, *that there were excuses for it, that it had its counterpart, and that it was not shown to the same degree in the case of every method of payment proposed ;* 2, *that it did not merely consist in systematically refusing to set apart available wealth for the reparations, it was more a question of inability to secure a majority and a leader strong enough to insist on the country making an effort to create a budgetary surplus, during a period of internal and external confusion ;* 3, *that it was not a new, unexpected, and specifically Germanic phenomenon*, and that peoples have always followed the line of their greatest interest very closely, in similar cases—setting themselves free either by evading or fulfilling their obligations, according to the possibilities. To talk of the possibility of " goodwill " on the part of the vanquished nation towards a

Treaty such as that of Versailles, is to imagine an ideal world which has never existed.[1] Or, at any rate, if the absurd expression is to be retained, it must be made clear that *"goodwill" is only likely to be shown if the considerations of self-interest, which may determine it, are present.*

The Criterion of Fulfilment.

It should be observed, in the first place, that the criterion of fulfilment might in itself be a matter of controversy, and that there have been honest differences of opinion, on this subject, between the signatories to the Treaty. *In reality, the general conditions were such as to lead the Allies to take an exaggerated view of the bad faith of their debtor, and the Germans to overrate the rapacity of their creditors.* The difference between Germany's estimates and those of the Reparation Commission has often been remarked upon, yet neither are altogether false. The real explanation of the difference is to be found in the fact that the *transfer of wealth involves waste and consequent loss.* Everything that is sent from Germany does not reach the Allies. What is debited to the one does not correspond with what is credited to the other. This is true in a general way. It is quite evident, for instance, that the value of German industrial concerns in foreign countries differs according to whether they form part of the German economic system or not, that the amount produced by their sale, at the prices recorded by the Reparation Commission, does not correspond to the intrinsic loss recorded by Germany; or that, on more general lines, the disturbance of the economic system, caused by the territorial dismemberment of Germany, involved a loss to her which does not enter into the Allies calculations; or, again, inversely, that any influx of German goods into France would be detrimental to the latter by their competition with French goods; this could not however be reckoned against the German payments.

The essence of reparations is that, like war, they injure

[1] At the Conference of December 1922, Bonar Law frankly recognized that Germany, like any other nation, would not pay her debts if she could avoid doing so. All the more, because she was allowed to exploit an historical controversy to dispute her obligation of honour.

everyone, without altogether benefiting anyone. But certain provisions of the Treaty and the policy adopted in carrying them out intensified these drawbacks. The costs of the occupation overburdened the German budget, putting her to fresh expense without bringing in anything towards the reparations. The different priorities accorded to our Allies added fresh obstacles to those already existing be-between the French creditor and the debtor. Finally, the occupation of the Ruhr brought Germany's liabilities up to the maximum and France's profits down to the minimum. Thus hatred grew simultaneously with the deficit in both countries.

Inflation.

The history of the deliveries in kind has shown us, however, that Germany was not always intractable, nor had she the monopoly of "bad faith". It is true that at the very time when she was making us offers of this nature, she was evading payment in cash by inflating her currency. But before we can quite understand the character of this "swindle", its historical origin must be made clear. After the war, Germany found herself with a budget deficit and an unfavourable trade balance. These were conditions common to all the European States. In 1919 to 1920, France's imports rose to forty milliards in excess of her exports, and she was obliged to increase her circulation and embark on an extensive policy of loans, at the same time preparing to vote another eight milliards of fresh taxation.

But these general difficulties attendant on the liquidation of the war, reprovisioning, adaptation, etc., were specially serious in the case of Germany, because she was suddenly deprived of her most valuable sources of production, of her economic machinery, of her foreign balances, and of the imponderables known as credit, confidence, hope, and the authority of the State, besides having at the same time to defray the cost of political and administrative reorganization, as well as of the experiments in socialization devised by her new Government. How was the inevitable deficit to be made up? An external loan was out of the question, on account of the Allies' lien and the enormous

and indeterminate debt whose menace hung over Germany ; an internal loan would only mean deferred inflation, in view of the gloomy prospects. The sole means of obtaining credit which was widely open to her was the sale of paper money to foreign speculators.

By this procedure alone—the exchange of steadily depreciating paper for gold—the Germans cleared off their deficit, but through it they also came to grief. *The issue of notes had been a necessity at first, and an appreciable alleviation of real difficulties : it may also have corresponded with a systematic plan of "controlled inflation", intended to stimulate exports, which had to be done in order to carry out the Treaty : then it went on till it reached the stage when it paralysed the fiscal system and inevitably produced further inflation,* without its being possible to do anything to put a stop to it permanently, unless help came from outside.

From 1921 to 1923, the phenomena succeeded one another known as "pathological exportation and consumption", a "cycle of exchanges and prices", and "flight from the mark", etc., which made its progress geometrical. During this period, investment in building and plant, and the "flight of capital" were the only forms of saving money, and they were encouraged by the Government. The industrialists were able to profit openly at that time by the fall in the value of the mark, which enabled them to make money at the expense of the middle class, Germany's *prosperity and misery thus becoming, not contradictions in terms, but two effects of the same cause.*

The German Government's Weakness.

It is true that the German Government hastened this natural process by excessive expenditure. An effort has been made to excuse this by calling attention to the fact that the first step to be taken to guard against a deficit would have been to do away with all extra and unremunerative expenditure, and that the greater part of this had reference to the compulsory execution of the Treaty ; that the subsidies to industry or to the merchant marine were either indemnities provided for by the Treaty itself, or

methods of encouraging the economic expansion which must be the basis of the reparations, and that consequently they were not necessarily incompatible with the intention of carrying it out; that the food subsidies were a means of checking the rise in prices, a factor which conduced to inflation; that the dismissal of a large number of officials, which might have eased the budget at once, would probably have been partially counterbalanced by the gratuities payable to those thus added to the ranks of the unemployed, and that, from a more general standpoint, there was a risk, in divided post-war Germany, of radical measures of economy resulting in social troubles which would merely have added to the deficit in another way.

But these are only secondary reasons. To enable us to understand the German budget, we must form a clear idea of the political situation: 1. The inadequacy of a democratic constitution drafted under the influence of defeat, and unsuited to the education of the people; 2. Theoretical Government by the parties of the Left, whilst the great industrial owners really had the upper hand, owing to the progress of economic concentration, political instability being caused by this conflict of power, and financial instability by the addition of fiscal evasion and State extravagance; 3. The natural tendency of statesmen, in these difficult circumstances, to adopt the easiest and most cowardly solution, which had the additional advantage, in their eyes, of being likely to precipitate the revision of the Treaty of Versailles they considered both desirable and inevitable; in short, general want of confidence. The essential question was whether, in spite of these unfavourable conditions, a strong Government could be established in Germany, capable of inducing the working class to accept draconic restrictions and, at the same time, of compelling the industrialists to save the financial position by guaranteeing the payments.[1] *Now this depended on the Allies' general policy.*

[1] Moreover, these measures could not have been more than a preliminary stage, the basis of an International loan. Until the amount of the reparations was fixed and her foreign credit restored, isolated efforts made by Germany could only be in the nature of expedients. Witness the Rentenmark in 1924.

The Political Question.

Had the French Government any German policy? At the time of the Kapp *Putsch*, in the spring of 1920, they seemed to be clearly upholding the Socialists. In 1921, the Allies brought Wirth's "socializing" Government into power by their London ultimatum, but without giving it the international conditions of life which were essential to it. In 1922, the opinion in Paris was that this Government was too weak, that it had not been able to make the holders of German wealth "pay"; Cuno's advent to power was welcomed at first, as it was hoped that he would have the support of the industrial owners, and there seemed to be an idea of trying to solve the problem of reparation by direct conversations with them. Finally, in 1923, the occupation of the Ruhr deprived the Socialists of all power, by obliging them to follow in the wake of Nationalism.

After having appealed to the democratic elements in Germany for three years, but without offering them any compensation for their sacrifices, we were making them appear to be acting in concert with foreign countries and at the same time responsible for the national misfortune. The partizans of conciliation resigned themselves to the disaster, and the partizans of resistance profited by their unpopularity. France's course of action consequently defeated her political aim without benefiting her financially. The effect on Germany's economic system of the payments made in 1921 and 1922 was such as to make it impossible for her to continue them. Moreover, what she had done towards paying *had never been from an honest determination to comply with the terms of the Treaty*, or any belief in its survival. *It merely represented a provisional and opportunist attitude.* In 1921, Wirth told the French journalists that he would carry out the London agreement "with all its consequences". This formula hardly concealed his intention of profiting by his show of goodwill to prove to the world that Germany could not pay.[1]

France ought to have made it a rule that her policy should offer a premium to any Parties willing to carry out the Treaty,

[1] The incapacity became real later on. The German Government's strategy merely consisted in putting the clock forward (we need only recall the way in which the first milliard was transferred).

instead of choosing between Parties, taking up the Socialists, or negotiating with the industrialists. This would have provided a firm basis for the great Stresemann-Scheidemann Coalition Government, which alone could have imposed a reparation budget on Germany. Working indirectly in this way would have been of much more use than a clumsy invasion which could only succeed, in the long run, in uniting all the Parties against us. No German Government could pay, and continue in office, unless they could point to concessions acquired and give the people reason for hope, whilst appealing at the same time to external pressure as an excuse for asking them to make the necessary sacrifices. And to be efficacious, the pressure would have had to come from all the Allies, who could only have been united in support of a moderate programme. In any case, the transaction was imperative. It was necessary to compromise, after first deciding what were the essential ends to be achieved. But our Government, hedged about by their own propaganda, preferred an integral and unprofitable victory.[1] *Consequently the Germans, who needed something to rely upon, trusted to the Allies falling out, instead of relying on France's moderation as they ought to have been able to do.* They spent their time in pursuing one will-o'-the-wisp after another, first hoping, in 1920, that the Russian army would come to their rescue and, in 1921, for American arbitration, then for the preservation of Upper Silesia within the Empire, in 1922 for an International loan, and in 1923 that England would intervene against France.

The execution of the Treaty they professed to intend carrying out was also a will-o'-the-wisp. But the disastrous consequences of irregular payments were evident to everyone, and they could only be provisionally levied by means of promises made to the Party leaders in the Reichstag. From their conversations with the British Ambassador, the Chancellor and Stresemann had gathered that if Germany accepted the London ultimatum, she would be given territorial compensation in the east. The allotment of the

[1] The French Nationalists spoke contemptuously of reparation as a political problem. No doubt it was, but even as such they dealt with it in the wrong way.

greater part of Upper Silesia to Poland, in accordance with the League of Nations' decision, put an end to these hopes and was a death blow to the partizans of conciliation.[1] In spite of this, Wirth continued to play up alternately to the Nationalists and the Entente, and to maintain an appearance of goodwill for another year, but after the rebuff to the Bankers' Committee Germany abandoned all hope.

Prior Conditions of Fulfilment.

If we examined the details of the Budget one after another and applied a few " ifs " which perhaps might not always coincide with the practical possibilities, it would be easy to show that during the whole of this period, Germany might have managed her finances better and paid more. But these particular questions, *which are inseparable, at all events psychologically, from the general problem of reparation,* cannot be honestly solved one by one. The Germans have always maintained, with good reason, that their ability to pay depended on the methods employed to recover the debt. Poincaré's attitude, which for long consisted in waiting for the debtor to " get out of difficulties " in order to meet the demands made by the creditor, without suggesting a practical plan to that end, approved by a body of experts, was not only negative, it was really destructive, at a time when the whole commercial and financial organization depended so largely on intangible elements, such as an atmosphere of confidence. Agreement on a few essential points might, on the contrary, have disposed of all the difficulties in fixing the details.

Determination of Amount Payable.

In the first place, a system of payments could not be organized until the amount of the debt was fixed—if not the capital amount, then at least the nature of the annuities and the length of time during which they would be payable. This was essential for Germany, so that she might set to work with some feeling of hope. She would never wish to

[1] Rathenau admitted this to the French representative.

pay her debts except in order to free herself from the burden of them. Until now, she has found it easier to resort to failure, in view of the stupendous amount of her debt and the uncompromising attitude of her principal creditor, and she has, in fact, succeeded, by this means, in getting the debt reduced from two hundred to fifty milliards, that is to say by three-fourths.

But she has had to pay a heavy price for her resistance ; so long as it lasted, it was impossible for her to put her finances on a really sound footing, and fresh recourse to inflation would have led to even greater loss than the first. It is therefore by no means impossible that she may find it more to her advantage to make the payments fixed as they fall due, or even in advance, if she is likely to benefit by that. Poincaré fully appreciates the fact, since his objections to the English proposal of December 1922 were chiefly dictated by fear that Germany might be in a position to pay too soon. The criterion of success would be her voluntarily affixing her signature to a French scheme, and preparing a Budget consistent with the scheme : the rest would follow automatically. She must feel the problem of reparation, as Forgeot once said, "behind her", instead of always "before her". Like France in 1871, she must find it more in her interest to obey than to resist, to pay than to remain in bondage, and to pay *quickly* rather than pay *more. Wirth talked of a "policy of execution" in* 1922—*which was hypocrisy.* Marx talked of *a "policy of liberation" in* 1924 *; that may be honest.*[1]

It was also necessary for France that the debt should be fixed, for her ability to obtain the credits which alone could help to balance her Budget without delay depended on it. Naturally the amount fixed would not be in accordance with the ideal limit of a maximum "capacity to pay", supposing that this could be accurately estimated. "Germany's capacity to pay", Poincaré truly said, quoting the economist Lansburgh, "can only be measured by the extent of the sacrifices the German people are willing to

[1] This policy was started in 1924, when the Experts' report opened up the possibility of it for the first time. We will explain our views as to the part the occupation of the Ruhr played, and could have played in this evolution, later on.

make." In reality, the *German* problem [1] of reparation consists, theoretically, in reducing consumption, i.e. the standard of life of the working class, as much as possible, without going beyond the point when this reduction would affect production itself. This is certainly a very elastic factor, which depends on the German "will". But there are psychological limits to the power of self sacrifice which are well recognized by possible lenders. *The real measure of the debt is the figure which seems to an impartial observer possible of attainment by a continuous effort during a limited period, assuming that the agreement is not repudiated and that there are no social disturbances.* It should be added that financiers would probably under-estimate it, in order that the loan might be better guaranteed and easier to place, and that the total fixed would be diminished, as far as France is concerned, by the amount of interest and commission deducted by the intermediaries,[2] the payments, once more, not corresponding with the reparation debt. It would be unfair not to point out these risks in connection with an international loan, and to contrast idealistic visions with the bankrupt policy of the National *bloc*; but it must be said plainly that the choice is between this solution, with all its shortcomings, and having to forgo still more. In point of fact, the difference between the amount nominally due and that capable of being collected [3] is a purely fictitious form of asset, all the sound profit-earning resources having already been pledged as collateral for the loans.[4] Even the uncertainty is calculated seriously to diminish the chances of mobilization. We are again confronted with the complex: increase in the amount due—decrease in the payments. That is the practical position of the problem.

Moreover, even mathematically, it would not be at all in our interest to fix the debt at a higher amount, for the

[1] These considerations do not affect the international transfer problem, which, as the Experts recognized in 1924, is the most difficult to solve.

[2] In reality it would certainly exceed the 5 per cent. estimated by the Schedule of Payments.

[3] We mean theoretically mobilizable, for the capacity and arrangements of the money market vary according to circumstances.

[4] Or, at all events, the only additional contribution that could be counted upon would be deliveries in kind, which, we have seen, have been almost ignored.

payments would then have to be extended over such a long period that the " present value " of the amount, diminishing in proportion, would not be modified by the higher estimate. The finest example of this system is in the Versailles Treaty itself, which stipulated that the interest on bonds not immediately transferable was to be capitalized, the result being that Germany might find herself more heavily burdened at the end of a year of normal payments than at the beginning of the same year, and that her growing capacity of payment would never overtake this snowball debt. And similarly, on a lesser scale, the London agreement, fixing a debt of 132 milliards, but arranging for its extinction by an annuity of two milliards plus 26 % on the value of German exportations, which obviously could not represent the interest on such a sum, or even on the first instalment (fifty milliards) for a long time to come, was simply a sham, for although, as Poincaré is fond of reminding us, the Reparation Commission has only power to defer the German payments and not to reduce them, everyone knows that postponements are equivalent, in practice, to reductions. But no doubt it is waste of time to linger any longer over these imaginary solutions, for to honest minded men and women *there has never been any question of more than an indemnity of from thirty to fifty milliards, varying in present value according to the length of time covered by the payments, guaranteed by earmarking certain private receipts, as well as offering inducements in the way of discount and evacuation, and proposed as an alternative to common action by the Allies.*

Having reached this point, we are better able to appreciate the character and causes of Germany's ill will, and the possible remedies. And we can also see how very much it depended on the general policy pursued by the Allies. It must be remembered that the execution of the Treaty, even in its technical details, depended almost as much on the victors as on the vanquished nations. It could only be carried out by *mutual goodwill*, i.e. by collaboration between them. The whole blame for its non-execution could not be imputed to Germany unless, in addition to her obligation to pay reparations, the Allies were bound, for their part, to

accept the proposals of reparation she made. But this was not the intention of the Treaty. Annex IV states that "direct material restoration will not be accepted except to the extent that may be determined by the Allied and Associated Powers"; and, in practice, as we have seen, deliveries in kind were only accepted to a very limited extent by the French Government. Similarly, by their tariff policy, the British Government did their best to discourage the increase in German exportation on which payment in cash mainly depended. To leave Germany a perfectly free hand would obviously have been enabling her to develop her industries to the detriment of the Allied industries; but to deprive her of the easiest and most advantageous method of paying reparations was merely encouraging her not to pay them at all.

Estimate of Damages.

Lastly, the Treaty not having given any figure determining the amount of the German debt, and deliveries in kind being practically excluded, very different estimates might be formed of the value of the damages, largely reflecting the political tendencies of the French Government. The figures were bound to vary a good deal, according to the time taken by the work of reconstruction, the nature of the labour employed, the control exercised over demands for compensation, the conditions of competition in the market of the devastated areas, the price indices used, the exchange, etc. Is it necessary to give instances? The actual cost of the work of repairing the soil, done by prisoners and the inhabitants immediately after the war, was admitted to be represented by the same figure as in 1914; for the work remaining to be done after 1920, a ratio of increase of one to three was adopted. Inversely, the coefficient of industrial reconstruction between 1920 and 1922, went down from five to three, as a result of increased competition.

Claims and Abatements.

How was the estimate formed? Owing to the local Committees not having been set up in time, a valuation was

made, based on the reports drawn up by the Prefects of the devastated departments, which was handed to the Reparation Commission at the end of 1920. The French claim reached a total of 140 milliards. Now, according to the Budget estimate of recoverable expenses drawn up in the autumn of 1923, the total cost of reparation would not amount to more than 100 milliards, of which eighty-five were for compensation to the *sinistrés* (victims of devastation). Consequently, in 1920, it was a question of a fictitious claim, made out by applying to the loss suffered a coefficient of about five, which corresponded with a temporary economic position of over-consumption, bad organization of labour (the transport service not having been restored, as it ought to have been, before beginning reconstruction), and market conditions in the devastated areas which were quite artificial. In fact, a year later, the coefficient had come down to three and a half, the average rate at which the whole work of reconstruction was done, as we have seen.

The forty supplementary milliards claimed by France, which were, or proved to be unnecessary, which could never have been paid, and to which France was not entitled, nevertheless played their part, but to the injury of both France and Germany, by preventing the debt from being fixed for a long time. At the Paris and London Conferences in January and March 1921, the French Government still reckoned their total claim at 108 milliard gold marks [1]—at the average rate of post-war exchange, 320 milliard francs. This encouraged a similar increase in the amounts claimed by the other Allied creditors, and made it impossible to come to any agreement, whereas a unilateral reduction would have automatically involved a reduction of the rival claims—the percentages being fixed in advance—and would have enabled them all to be paid. Even the subsequent "amputations" from the debt to France, so freely denounced in 1921 by the Press and Parliament, did not correspond with any official diminution in the Treaty debt, since the theoretical sixty-eight milliard gold marks of the London agreement covered the 100 milliard for reparation

[1] Including pensions.

and seventy-seven milliard for pensions.[1] The Allied experts merely came to the conclusion that, until she had improved her position, Germany could not undertake either immediate payment of the interest and amortization of such a heavy debt, or subsequent payment of moratorium interest compensating for the initial failure. The result was a delay in the issue of " C " bonds representing eighty-two milliards of the debt, and a consequent actual reduction, for the first time, of the German obligations. Others followed.

Although most French people agreed in blaming Briand for the concessions made—those Poincaré was obliged to make having, for some unknown reason, assumed an air of victory—the historian must admit that it was when the latter was in office that the greatest reduction in the debt to France was made. France's share, under the London agreement, still amounted to thirty-nine milliards, according to Bokanovski's estimate. In 1923, Poincaré no longer claimed more than twenty-six. Yet even this moderate demand still left a sum due to us which, at the average rate of exchange that year, must have insured Germany's paying for the reconstruction, in spite of all the waste which had increased the cost.[2] The claim in respect of pensions being, as we have shown, both illegal and contrary to French interests, *these twenty-six milliards represented France's just claim. Anything she claimed in excess of this amount would be a wrong rather than a right.*

Now was it really impossible to obtain those twenty-six milliards from Germany immediately after the victory? The renunciation of the sum claimed for pensions might have justified a revision of the Allied percentages, but even if those fixed in 1920 were adhered to, the total debt built up round the French claim ought not to have been more than fifty milliards. This is a lower estimate than any formed during the Peace Conference, except that of Keynes,

[1] These conflicting opinions expressed at the time were based on the arbitrary and dishonest hypothesis of a rise in the value of our currency which, however, was impossible, owing to our financial policy, and in which, moreover, we had no interest.

[2] We are allowing that the interest on " A " and " B " bonds would have made up for the interest on loans issued for the work of reconstruction.

and is equal to his, the most moderate and rational of them all. *The difference, so often appealed to, between the amount justly due and "capacity to pay" was only invented by the politicians.* That being so, what justification could the French Government have thought there was for this disastrous policy? They evidently reckoned (1) that by encouraging both an over-estimate of "supplementary costs" and of the high prices which partially justified it, they would be giving the contractors who were doing the work of reconstruction a chance of making large profits, and the industrial owners, whose factories were reconstructed, the means of setting up the most improved plant, paid for from the outset, and capable of insuring their superiority in European competition; (2) that by this over-estimate they would secure an addition to the bill to be paid by Germany, which, if it did not allow of the payments being increased (the result was exactly the opposite), would at least allow of the period fixed for the execution of the Treaty being prolonged, and thus perpetuate French domination; (3) that by presenting the bill at the moment when the index reached its peak, they would give an appearance of justice to the exaggerated claims, whilst preparing future profits for the time when the index figure would go down; (4) that it might thus be possible for them to set apart the difference between the reparation debt and the cost of reconstruction, towards paying off the costs of the war, or, which was the same thing, the Inter-Allied debts (at the end of 1921, the French proposal to apply the "C" bonds to repayment of these debts made this device clear).

The reparation policy consequently aimed at doubly circumventing the Treaty, *by making it indirectly include the costs of the war or payment of the Inter-Allied debts, which we had been refused at Versailles, and at the same time allow of the Rhinelands occupation being extended beyond the limits fixed.* But this skilful manœuvre was destined to turn against France in the long run. During the happy years when people still lived in hope of "the Boche paying", there would have been a great outcry against anyone who tried to prevent the French Government from unduly

over-estimating Germany's debt, thereby arresting the development of our victory, as they would have been accused of doing in the language of those days. At that time, people had not realized that such infractions of treaties seldom benefit a victorious ally. Now that *it is evident that all the waste of time and money was at our expense, and that the result of the over-estimates was to diminish Germany's capacity as well as her will to pay*, we may denounce them unmercifully.

Reparation or Security?

But to consider this long history of the reparation question merely from the financial point of view is not enough. It had been, in a way, a perpetual cloak for political struggles. Finding themselves confronted with what they thought was the dilemma of having to choose between reparation and security, the French Government had not the courage to make a definite choice between the extreme possibilities open to them, the one being to sacrifice part of the debt in return for the Rhine, of which there had been a question in the course of the secret negotiations with Erzberger, the other to sacrifice the Rhine in return for a properly organized system of reparation, which could have been arranged with Stresemann. Their policy oscillated between anxiety to be paid and fear of German *revanche*, but it inclined more and more to give precedence to the question of security. *At first they pursued two contradictory aims simultaneously, in the vague hope of achieving one or other, or, to be more exact, a policy of reparation was carried on in which its authors themselves had no great confidence, but at the back of their minds they thought that, if it failed, they could limit their aims to increased security; then, in proportion as the truth with regard to the financial position became clear, they deliberately aimed at military domination.* The historian, looking back on this vaguely combined series of steps, and trying to discover its underlying logic, is led to attribute the whole history of the reparations to the defeat of the French plan to establish a Rhinelands Protectorate in 1919. *How could the fifteen years we had been allowed be prolonged, and how could we quietly revert to the initial aim,*

except by prolonging the execution of the Treaty which our occupation was to have guaranteed, and preventing the delays from expiring? [1] France and Germany tacitly collaborated in bringing about this result.

Indirect Annexation.

But this hypocrisy which was at the root of our policy, this disloyalty to the spirit of the Treaty, introduced a pernicious element into it. Security was the essential object, but that could not be admitted, on account of the Allies. Their opposition and our reticence prevented our giving the Rhinelanders any certainty that we should remain there permanently. And, on the other hand, if reparation was a secondary consideration, it was none the less necessary. But each time a practical solution was suggested, it had to be rejected, lest it should react on the occupation of the Rhinelands. An economic agreement? It would have to be preceded by a relaxation of the political tension, in other words, evacuation of the Rhine provinces. An International loan? Commercializing the debt? These plans would necessitate transferring the securities, liens, and guarantees constituted by the Versailles Treaty to neutrals, our troops would have to relinquish the control and reparation would no longer be in the nature of a tribute and expiation. It would be preferable, for the sake of the lenders, to go and take forcible possession of the pledges the latter did not demand, and which would even, in their opinion, make it impossible to raise the loan.

These transparent falsehoods were merely a cloak for further designs which could not always be concealed. They became clear for the first time when Poincaré proposed, in exchange for the moratorium Germany wanted, a system of Rhineland guarantees which he admitted would not bring in any return worth considering. This was in London, in August 1922. The second time was when advantage was taken of the occupation of the Ruhr to expel a number

[1] In a speech of the 3rd of February, 1921, which cannot be read to-day without a smile, Tardieu spoke of the possibility of Germany's paying the 226 milliard gold marks of the Paris agreement as a great danger, which would oblige us to leave the Rhinelands.

of Prussian officials, and get up a Separatist movement. Even before that, an easy process of reasoning had established a case outside France, from which our Imperialism had been inferred before it became evident. It was urged that the occupation was inseparable from the execution of the Treaty. Now the arrangements made for its execution were such that the great majority of experts throughout the world declared that it could not be carried out. Moreover, according to the official French theory, Germany's debt was "independent of her capacity to pay"; and, instead of extinguishing the debt, the London Agreement was calculated to increase it automatically, at all events for a long time, through the interplay of interests. Consequently the occupation was practically unlimited.

This indirect annexation by the Government, in which, curiously enough, the majority of the French people did not believe, was a triple mistake: in the first place, it was not in accordance with the wishes expressed by the nation, or with the spirit of the Treaty it claimed to be applying; secondly, it roused public opinion against us, particularly in England, far more than our anxiety to be paid; thirdly, it convinced the Germans that our ambitions were chiefly territorial, and that it was no use working to pay us, since we were not interesting ourselves much more in the question of reparation than they were; this gave their resistance an aspect of patriotism. This policy not only reacted disastrously on the payments,[1] but was very far from guaranteeing our security, for it inflamed national feeling in Germany, gained her the sympathy of our Allies in many contests, and, having been decided upon without loyal consultation with the French people, it risked being only provisional, and leaving the situation worse than before.

Particularism.

Was there at any rate a chance of realizing the federalist ideal which seemed to inspire our policy? On two occasions,

[1] Our policy in the Rhine provinces was also directly opposed to our financial interests. The "hole in the west", in particular, contributed to aggravate the disturbance of the German commercial equilibrium which was the greatest obstacle to the payment of reparation.

in 1918 to 1919 and in 1923, German centralization showed signs of giving way, under the influence of internal difficulties caused by Allied pressure. On the one hand, States with heterogeneous social tendencies, democratic Prussia, reactionary Bavaria, and socialist Saxony, reacted in different ways, and adopted an independent attitude, as far as that was possible. On the other hand, the inhabitants of the Rhinelands, anxious to preserve order and peace, and seeing Germany weltering first in revolution, then in economic chaos, contemplated relaxing the ties which bound them to the great Empire whose fate was uncertain. But neither in the one case nor the other did this wish for autonomy extend to wishing to break away altogether, and fear of Prussian centralization never engendered love for France on the Rhine. Moreover, it was a mistake to wish the occupied areas to be detached from Germany, for they were a source of weakness in her system, and they would be a source of weakness in a French system. It might even be questioned whether their autonomy would be any great advantage to us. It would set up a frontier march whose inhabitants would be naturally opposed to war, and would do their best to prevent it, but, in return, it would also break up Prussia, deprive her of a large proportion of her democratic elements, and throw her back towards Nationalism. It would be exchanging a gain for a loss, and the whole question was whether it would be better that the Rhinelanders should exert their conciliatory influence within the former kingdom or within the former Empire. In any case, this was the only possible solution, and it certainly was possible.

But what we wanted was suddenly to change the direction of the people's natural tendencies, and precipitate matters. We failed to understand the particular nature of the feeling in the Rhinelands, which combined proud consciousness of belonging to the Germanic community and intolerance of any foreign interference, with a quasi-hostility to Berlin. The Separatist movement imperilled the movement in favour of autonomy.[1] On the other hand, our prolonged

[1] In 1923, the movement in favour of autonomy ceased to be regarded as anything more than a means of safeguarding against separation; the movement in favour of it was carried on in opposition to the Separatist movement, and ceased when the latter came to an end.

military occupation, with its inevitable excesses, had thrown the burden of Berlin's former domination into the shade, in the minds of the Rhinelanders, the result being that the men of the Centre Party, who had at first been the most prominent supporters of the principle of emancipation, joined the representatives of all the Rhineland Parties in deciding to take no advantage of the facilities offered by the Weimar Constitution,[1] while our troops still remained in the country. Above all, belief in Germany's future and in the divisions between the Allies which would enable her to throw her weight into the scale, had never been sufficiently weakened for it to be possible for our influence to supersede hers. The inhabitants continued to believe in the future which would restore them to Germany, in possible reprisals, and in the natural tradition and economic orientation of the provinces. Neither they nor the world in general believed in our indefinite supremacy. We did not, and could not have persuaded them that a victory or treaty could have power permanently to reverse the true relative strength of two nations between whom there was an increasing inequality.

As to the other countries in Germany, particularism there was never calculated to serve our interests. In Bavaria, where the tendency was most marked, it was accompanied by intensified rather than diminished anti-French feeling. There can be no doubt that, had Germany " fallen to pieces ", the separate States would have declared their inability to pay reparations, but would still have been capable of concluding an offensive and defensive alliance against us, as in 1870, not to say that the advantages of political association were so great that they would inevitably have reverted to it later on, having only given themselves time to escape from carrying out the Treaty by their temporary independence of one another. But our policy excluded even this hypothesis. *To create separatism is to create irredentism: to revive the question of the status quo was to make it a common ideal: the*

[1] J. de Pange tells us, in *Les Libertés Rhénanes*, that the decision followed on France's intervention in favour of the Separatist Smeets, in 1921. The agitation against Prussian domination had begun to lose ground after the Dorten-Mangin affair, in 1919.

occupied areas were to become the symbol of German unity, and national feeling, growing in strength as the material difficulties increased, was finally to prove strong enough to overcome them.

The National *Bloc*.

Did the members of the National *bloc* fully realize the bold designs that were being pursued under cover of its policy, and that directed it? We think not. They would have been alarmed if they had discovered that they were carrying out the policy of the Royalists. But at any rate they made it impossible for the various leaders they chose in succession, to adopt any other course. They all had to minister to the same tendencies and contend with the same obstacles.

Tardieu.

Tardieu seemed to be constantly at variance with Briand and Poincaré. He accused them of not being firm enough. But how were they to show their firmness, if they took office? By military force? No. In 1922, Tardieu disapproved of isolated action, and pointed out the dangers of occupying the Ruhr. His view was that the policy of obtaining redress ought to be carried out in agreement with our Allies. But he never told us how this agreement could be reached whilst insisting on the French policy. His criticism was purely negative. He tried to exploit Nationalist feeling at the same time as the mistake of acting independently. He was continually comparing the prestige France enjoyed immediately after the victory, when none of the questions had been settled, with her difficulties during the succeeding period, when efforts were being made to settle them. What he wanted people to infer was that the difference was due to a different Government being in office. He tried to give vague regrets the form of syllogisms, which always came back, in the end, to a personal question, like the reproaches levelled against him by his opponents.

Briand.

Similarly, *the leader of the Clemencist party, like all the men who held office, recognized the necessity for inter-Allied agreement, but the principles on which his policy was based prevented his achieving it.* Briand must at least be credited with having made an honest effort in that direction. The only thing for which he can be blamed is his not having aimed at anything more than a compromise between the divergent opinions, for having tried to adapt his policy to the real situation without first explaining it to the country and bringing about a moral evolution. This doomed it to failure. Even before public opinion, which had been taken by surprise, turned against him and drove him from office, he had been obliged to appease it, and compensate for his renunciation of the Ruhr project by adopting an intransigent attitude at the Washington Conference, and this mistaken diplomacy alienated a good deal of sympathy from us.

At Cannes, in dealing with the international problems which had to be solved, he did wrong in giving the Anglo-French agreement, on which they were to be based, the character of a bargain very little to the advantage of France, and crowned by a pact subject to all the chances of English domestic policy. His idea of re-establishing the Entente was by the former method of alliances, instead of its forming part of the rational and general development of the League of Nations ; or at any rate, if he was associated with a greater undertaking, it was, thanks to Lloyd George, with the hasty and foolish plan of pacification which came to an untimely end at Genoa.

In short, the measures to which he had been obliged to agree in the course of the negotiations over reparation, reacted on public opinion without bringing the problem within the sphere of practical realities, so that, contrary to a widespread belief, the concessions he made to the spirit of peace were not sufficient, and, above all, they were badly prepared and badly directed. Moreover, however inadequate his efforts may have been, they were so much at variance with the tendencies of the Majority that a

perfectly natural evolution led him to appear the leader of the Opposition, even during the lifetime of the two Chambers.

Poincaré.

Apart even from any question of principle, Poincaré's personality must have given our policy a very different character. The President of 1914, "frozen", as Nietzsche would say, to the declaration of war, has preserved all his former qualities: memory and perseverance, command of language and knowledge of the law, combined with the art of repeating things of secondary importance at the right moment, and being silent on essential points. But these gifts, which had stood him in good stead in the days of secret diplomacy, did not suffice to solve the complex post-war problems. In this new era, when politics are no longer controlled by the Chancelleries, are discussed in the market square, and have become largely propaganda, a jurist no longer cuts such a great figure. We realize better now that intellect is not always sufficient, unless it is associated with the sources which give it life: sympathy, tolerance, and belief in the future of humanity.

In the Poincaré of the year 1922, some undeniable qualities do no more than to imbue certain of his essential faults with all their destructive power. The amount of time and trouble he expends over a thousand secondary matters shows that he has never made the initial effort to set the various problems in their order of importance, which would have enabled him to devote all his energies to a few of the most pressing problems. His persistent adherence to the doctrines of the past saves him from the necessity of devising fresh solutions, amounts, in fact, to a sort of moral unemployment. Fear of opposition ties his hands, but does not enable him to escape it. He has the mind of a Tardieu, which always leads him to compare his successive speeches carefully, and he ends by turning politics into polemics, by bandying with Chancelleries, as with parliamentary parties, a whole series of demonstrations and refutations, which cause offence without being convincing. He is curiously afraid of censure, and seems more anxious for acquittal

than for success. As an international lawyer, he employs arguments in pleading before the European tribunal which might convince his French client. A sound classical education, limited, however, to his University recollections, leads him to despise economics and finance, and makes him incapable of understanding any point of view but his own, or of discerning the currents of European opinion, whilst at the same time it gives his ideas a spurious clarity which impresses people. This gratifies him, and convinces him that he is infallible. The arguments he adduced in support of his policy were so reasonable that they concealed its lack of foresight, and contributed to give the finishing touch to the historical conception the country chose to form of him, and endow with all his best qualities.

Poincaré really seems born to blind people to the difference between creative and automatic power, consistency and obstinacy, fidelity to tradition and respect for precedent, courage and inability to arrest machinery once set in motion, veracity and being veracious. Was he not always honest, even when he denied the obvious truth? His sense of honesty has been blunted in the course of his long life as a lawyer, which has accustomed him to defend good and bad causes with equal ability, and it has been superseded by a system in which to secure conviction is the point of honour, and he is justified by the event. The Lorraine President does not correspond with the legendary Poincaré, but in that character he attracted a naïve and uncertain Majority he scorned, and who did not share his social or religious views. *Their support enabled him to pursue a policy of his own, just because he was considered representative of the nation.* And Europe, judging the country by its actions, and dissociating herself from us, did not see that the character of a lawyer was not necessarily characteristic of the whole of France.

The Execution of the Treaty and the Origins of the War.

The natural tendency of a man in whom arrogance and a legal mind combined to form a curious anomaly would be

towards *strict adherence, not to the Treaty*—which Wilson, Stresemann, and Curzon, supported by the opinion of their legal advisers, accused him of violating by occupying the Ruhr—*but to the interpretation he had given it. And it was not only his view of the Treaty, but his whole pre-war past that told so strongly on the daily negotiations.* The recollection of the responsibilities he had assumed became a sort of obsession with Poincaré, which has struck everyone who has met him since the war. Looking back on the past, he tries to make the best excuse he can for an unwise policy by representing Germany as a " nation of robbers ". Since she has committed so many crimes, she must now be punished. He will be nothing loth to record the debtor's unwillingness to pay, which he will describe as the persistence of " the eternal Germany ". The " defaults " serve as arguments in support of his theory of responsibility, as well as being a reason for sanctions. Was he not quite right in not entering into an agreement with a nation which never has had and never will have any " respect for treaties " ?

Under the influence of these considerations, politics are dominated by questions of prestige, and solutions are delayed. Stress is laid on the moral distinction between us and our former enemies. Direct *pourparlers*, which would assuredly have furthered the negotiations, were avoided lest the two countries should appear to be on a footing of equality. We refused to allow Bergmann to state the German case at the Conference of January 1923, on the ground that Germany's proposals were never anything but " manœuvres ". The Ruhr conflict was prolonged at a time when, according to reports from our agents, " the question of reparation was ripe ", merely in order to secure her admission of defeat. We refused to inform her of our conditions, whilst communicating them to England and making them public.

Germany's Acceptance of the Terms.

Having rendered the payment of reparations economically more difficult, we made it morally more humiliating by acting in this way. We had already gone too far in representing

Germany's evasion of her obligations as a breach of contract. No doubt in not doing her best to pay the reparations, Germany was neglecting a sacred duty she had "solemnly" undertaken. But her legal obligation had been fixed on bases she did not recognize. The verdict on the question of responsibility was pronounced by one of the interested parties: the procedure had been summary, and based on incomplete evidence; it could not be authoritative.

Germany alone, of all the European States, had admitted her pre-war shortcomings,[1] but she had not voluntarily consented to accept sole responsibility for the war. On the 12th of May, 1919, Erzberger agreed with the other members of the Government that the Treaty was "intolerable and impracticable", and he only advised its ratification as a means of preventing a fresh outbreak of war, which would have made things worse. What he said to his colleagues was that they need only look at it from the point of view of a man who yields to force . . . that if they signed under compulsion they could not be accused of dishonesty.[2] And when a new Government finally came round to his view, and decided to ratify the signature, they stated at the same time that they did not admit that the German people were responsible for the war, and that they would not agree to extradite the persons accused of war crimes.

Isolated Application of the Treaty.

The Treaty was, moreover, not one of those diplomatic documents which establish a clearly defined situation, and apportion the wrongs in future controversies in advance. By their interpretation of it, or by extending its duration, the victors might seem to be making additions to it. The criterion of "capacity to pay" recognized by the Treaty might be a subject of endless controversy. There were excuses ready to hand for everything done or left undone. Germany's defaults were going to afford a pretext for

[1] She has forgotten them since then. The theory of sole responsibility has favoured the theory of German innocence. Our education of Germany has been the reverse of what we intended.

[2] Erzberger's memoirs.

sanctions, but at the same time they were going to necessitate reductions which would seem to justify the defaults after the event. *Before long, revisions by both victor and vanquished would be substituted for a text which had lost ground, and they would be in direct conflict with one another.*

To aspire to fix a definite policy in the doubtful framework of the Versailles Treaty, and pursue it blindly in the constantly changing circumstances after the war, was a downright absurdity. The Treaty represented, as it were, a joint affirmation by the Allies of their differences; its articles marked the frontiers between the conflicting views which would be fought out or discussed in the future, and, at the same time, it could only be executed by their joint exertions. How could approval of a particular doctrine be inferred from all that? *For any one Power to apply the Treaty would in itself be a violation of it,* for if it had to be summed up in a few essential Articles, the first would state, as Robert de Jouvenel pointed out, that the peace signed commemorated a victory won by all the Allies, and that its development must have their joint consent.

Moreover, the country did not in the least claim that a Treaty should be strictly applied which was already very unpopular. The people wanted fearless leaders. They expected the possible gains to be realized quickly, and the spirit of peace to be restored, but all they were given was a victory by which they gained nothing, and a peace governed by the methods of war.

II

THE RUHR

Inter-Allied Debts and Reparation.

The London Schedule of Payments having proved inapplicable directly it was put into force, and having had to be suspended by a moratorium early in 1922, the essential question was finally faced boldly in the course of that year. Till then it had been evaded. What it amounted to was that, in order to secure payment, less must be demanded—in other words, the German debt must be reduced. But if France and England agreed to make the sacrifice this would involve, at all events in appearance, for the benefit of their debtor, ought they not to be compensated by their own creditors making an equal sacrifice? Either the general question would have to be solved by an all round sacrifice, or none of the particular questions subject to it could be solved, and everyone would suffer.

The plan proposed by the Americans at Versailles for payment of the German debt was not accompanied by a plan to reduce the inter-Allied debts which might have rendered its acceptance possible. They have seriously added to the peace difficulties by adhering to their claims, both then and since. But, in our opinion, they might have been induced to give way. Poincaré's Government assumed that they were firmly resolved not to do so, and affected to look upon their refusal to cancel the debt as conclusive, admitting of no possibility of compromise, chiefly because it enabled them to give a ready answer to criticism from the Left, and dispose once for all of any question of international solutions by showing that there was only one course open to them: a policy of force they had decided upon

beforehand. In reality the question was complex, and this was not the only alternative.

The very nature of the American debt, which corresponded with various operations—liquidation of stocks, trade credits, and exchange credits—and was incurred at different times, suggests that an effort might have been made to discriminate between the series, to fund some and cancel others. Anyhow, the terms the United States agreed to in the case of Great Britain give reason to believe that the *American claim might have been modified by postponements, extension of the periods within which payments are due, favourable terms of interest, etc.*; concessions of this kind would have been made even more liberally to France, whose capacity to pay is not so great, and no doubt she might even have secured a moratorium.

Temporary psychological factors which worked against us, and largely explain the uncomprising attitude of the United States, must also be taken into account. It was said, and repeated in the American Press, that France was squandering her resources on military expenditure instead of facing her obligations, and our armaments, and those of the Little Entente Powers, which were facilitated by the credit we gave them, were regarded as proof of our capacity to pay, and at the same time, as a moral justification for claiming the repayment which would hasten disarmament, and thus contribute to the re-establishment of peace in Europe. In plain English, both the American and English claims were maintained chiefly as a means of exerting political pressure, to compel us to abandon an attitude the Anglo-Saxons considered contrary to the general interest. They have served to set up a fresh balance of power in the disorganized post-war world, in which financial power balances military power, and the debts act as a check on armaments. From this point of view a voluntary agreement between France, England, and Germany would entirely change the moral atmosphere, and deprive our ex-allies of their most cogent arguments.

Finally we had to consider what view our diplomats took of the question, and whether successful negotiations might not help very much to secure our point. *The French*

Government have always made annulment of the debts an indispensable, indeed practically the main condition on which they would agree to the fictitious reduction of the debt to France by abandoning a portion of the "C" bonds.[1] In putting it so bluntly, they were inviting certain defeat, which, for that matter, was what they wanted. Our creditors could not give up their claim so unreservedly. The position would have been very different if the French Government had allowed inter-Allied negotiations to be carried on freely, without limiting them in any way in advance, and had then, at a moment when they were progressing favourably, proposed and published a practical Reparation scheme, limited, inspiring confidence, and likely to be sanctioned by English and American public opinion, and had made it subject to an advantageous adjustment of the debts. We are not claiming that they would have secured annulment of the debts by this means, but that they would have ascertained the limit of the concessions the Anglo-Saxons were likely to make; and, if they did not seem equitable, we should then at least in so far have scored a success that the refusal would, for once, have come from beyond the seas; neutral opinion would have seen that the stumbling-block to European reconstruction was outside France. In any case, *the possibility of manœuvring our allies on the field of public opinion instead of always being manœuvred by them* would have been a victory for our propaganda.

But in our opinion it would have been wiser to be satisfied with the compromise that might have been negotiated in

[1] As a matter of fact, the English and Americans never attached any value to these bonds, which were offered in repayment of the debts due to them; consequently they looked upon the French proposal as a request that the debt should be cancelled, without there being any real counterpart on the French side. President Wilson even thought that instead of being a sacrifice, the reduction of the reparation debt would be an advantage to those to whom it was owing, for, as he wrote to Lloyd George in October 1920, a practical settlement of the reparation question would, in itself, increase the Allies' financial strength in the long run. It should also be observed that according to Poincaré's proposal of December 1922, relative to the European inter-Allied debts, the "C" bonds were only to be cancelled in proportion as the debts (due both from and to France) were cancelled. That is to say, that even in case of England's sacrificing the total amount due to her, the German debt could only be reduced by about 100 milliards, half of the "C" bonds continuing to be a burden on Germany's credit, and to make a "practical settlement" impossible.

1922, for it is hardly likely that we shall ever do better. Moreover, from one point of view at least, it would not be to our real interest that the debt should be entirely cancelled. If we succeeded in obtaining the consent of the American Government to this, it would none the less imperil the good relations between the two Republics, to some extent, because of the disappointment it would cause. Now a country so naturally menaced as ours must be very careful not to risk losing either her allies or her credit, in case of another war. There would be no reason for any great anxiety, even if the Americans insisted on their claims being paid in full, contrary to all probability. Payments in capital and guarantees being naturally out of the question, the first thing would be to ascertain whether it would be possible to establish credit balances corresponding to the interest on the French debt. And if this problem were solved, the mere announcement of the practical measures, both fiscal and financial, which such large transfers would necessitate, would probably deprive the Americans of all wish to benefit by them. In any case, the repercussions of our exports on American trade, and of our purchase of dollars on the exchange, would very soon lead to a revision of the initial agreement, the question of the debts having then followed just the same evolution—making due allowance for the difference between France and Germany—as the question of reparation, i.e. refusal of payment in kind by the creditor, demonstration of incapacity to pay by the debtor, moratorium and reduction of the debt.

But there is no need to imagine these extreme hypotheses. As far as England is concerned, her proposals, at least, have given evidence of a generous enough spirit, and *in an increasing degree up to the time when we occupied the Ruhr*. In 1920 Lloyd George simply refused to listen to suggestions in favour of a reduction of the debt to England without an American counterpart. Two years later, according to Balfour's Note of the 1st of August, 1922, his Government only claimed from *Europe* the amount the United States would require them to pay, which meant that they would give up the idea of balancing the debt to America by the French

debt, and that, to facilitate a reduction of the latter, they would earmark their share of the German reparations for repayment of the former. In December, Bonar Law went farther. He said that if there were to be a final settlement, the British Government would accept the risk of having to pay more to the United States than they would receive from the Allies and from Germany. At the same time he suggested that a certain number of the German annuities should be proportionately allotted to payment of inter-Allied debts, thus laying the bases of a general arrangement between the Allies and America.

Naturally these proposals did not hold good under all circumstances. The occupation of the Ruhr, undertaken against England's advice, rendered them null and void. In August 1923 Lord Curzon reverted to the principle Balfour had laid down a year earlier, namely, that Great Britain's debt would be the measure of her claims.[1] Like the heron in the fable, the French Government rejected all these proposals, which seemed to them the more inadequate in proportion as the situation was aggravated by these refusals. Hypnotized by fear of the German debt being reduced, they took no steps to form a coalition of debtors in the dependent Europe of post-war days, and the result is *that the prospects of a "clean slate" have entirely vanished, now that the Anglo-American debt has been settled independently. Each creditor turns to his debtors, and there is no real peace.*

The Moratorium.

The question of a moratorium was raised at the same time as the question of compensation for the debts, during the second half of 1922. Germany declared that she was unable to resume the payments provided for in the London Agreement. The temporary moratorium of March was extended in August by improvised methods. In December the question had at last to be faced. The fact is that the sudden fall in the value of the mark had rendered the reforms Germany had carried out, on the recommendation of the

[1] It has been fixed and reduced in the meantime by the Baldwin-Mellon agreement.

Reparation Commission, of no avail; the failure of the efforts that had been made to obtain a foreign loan put an end to all hope of the payments being resumed at once, and Wirth had just asked for an extended moratorium.

What, then, was the real character of the inter-Allied dispute? It would be incomprehensible if the arguments exchanged were taken literally and if we did not appreciate the secret intentions of the two Governments. Poincaré's whole past answers for his. Ever since, if not before the war, his whole aim has been to secure French control of the Rhine. In 1916, it was the President of the Republic, Ribot tells us, who was most bent on obtaining a "written guarantee" from the Tsar of his intention of promoting the establishment of an independent Rhineland State, in addition to furthering our claim with regard to Alsace-Lorraine. At a Cabinet meeting in 1917, when Ribot was reading out a proposed declaration that Alsace-Lorraine was all we claimed, it was he who openly demanded annexation of the left bank of the Rhine.[1] In October 1918 he expressed himself against the immediate conclusion of an armistice, on the ground that it would "unfit our soldiers for further fighting".[2] He intervened during the Peace Conference to ask that occupation of the Rhinelands should be associated with the execution of the Treaty.[3] Although this plan had been rejected by our allies, relinquished by Clemenceau's Government, and excluded from the Treaty, he remained faithful to it, and even went farther, for he proposed to hold the Ruhr as a guarantee for the reparation payments, in addition to the left bank of the Rhine. He publicly expressed regret that the Rhenish-Westphalian basin had not been occupied from the moment of Germany's first default, in May 1921, and threatened her with this again in May 1922.

Finally, following on his defeat at the August Conference, he had the operation worked out, and prepared to carry it

[1] Ribot, loc. cit. [2] L. Lyons, *Le Prestige du Pouvoir*.

[3] He seems never to have made any clear distinction between occupation as a guarantee and indefinite occupation. "Why did they not listen to you in 1919!" he said to Marshal Foch, when receiving him at the Academy. The Marshal had proposed permanent occupation, as is well known.

into effect. Germany's renewed demand for a moratorium—both inevitable and foreseen—gave him the opportunity he was waiting for. From that time *his mind was made up*. At the London Conference he asked for adherence to the Schedule of Payments, the institution of guarantees, and annulment of the French debts, but without proposing to abandon his military scheme in return. The Paris Conference was—as he admitted—a purely formal meeting, a last apparent conciliatory effort, in order to put a good face on the rupture. *England, on the contrary, feared the occupation of the Ruhr by France* as an event which would put an end to all hope of payment, upset the exchanges, and diminish her own influence in Europe. *Hence the desire to avoid it, if possible, by making suitable concessions.*

The Yellow Book relating to these last inter-Allied negotiations shows what a marked difference there was between Bonar Law's attitude and that of Poincaré. The former suggested a plan in which he went beyond the concessions he had previously made to settle the inter-Allied debts, and proposed an organization to control German finances. Even this organization was only a suggestion which was open to amendment, a basis for discussion. In all Conferences where there is an honest desire to reach an agreement, it is usual for the initial proposal to be one which does not represent all that the other side can obtain by negotiation—in other words, it does not mean that the extreme limit of conciliation has been reached, when there is nothing to be done but either to carry one's point or break off the negotiations. It is not all that it might be, simply because its authors know that in order to conclude an agreement they must relinquish part of their claim. Bonar Law formally stated that the British proposals were not by any means final.[1] In fact, he showed this when definite points were discussed. In particular, on Poincaré's objecting to the appointment of a German as chairman of the "Foreign Finance Council", Bonar Law replied at once that he was willing to give up that idea.

A true partisan of the Entente would probably have secured a good many other advantages. But Poincaré

[1] Yellow Book.

presented a programme he knew would be unacceptable to England, as a "minimum" programme, which did not admit of any concession. His chief concern was that no time should be lost in making it clear that the disagreement was one of principle, as this would enable him to avoid Germany's intervening in the discussion, and give him an excuse for occupying the Ruhr. He refused to consider any compromise which might reconcile the two points of view, and declared that they were irreconcilable. In order to cut short the controversy, he went so far as to present Bonar Law with what the latter described as a downright "ultimatum". *The contrast between the conciliatory attitude of the one and the unbending attitude of the other shows us the real nature of the two Conferences.*

But let us consider this "disagreement in principle" which was the official reason for the rupture. Judging only by appearances, it was not France but England who was isolated at the end of the discussion. The three Allied delegates did not, however, dissociate themselves from Bonar Law for the same reasons. Italy was more interested in the question of debts than in the question of reparation. She would have been quite willing that the British plan should condemn the methods proposed by France if it had granted her a more important reduction. She remained in our camp, but did not share our views. The plan she produced at the Conference did not provide for any fresh military occupation, and she was not going to be more than nominally a party to the Ruhr operations.

Belgium stood by France for general political reasons. One was her loyalty to the alliance, another was that the British proposal prejudiced her priority,[1] and this very priority disposed her to favour solutions susceptible of giving a limited but immediate return, which would be dangerous for a more important and less privileged creditor. She did not, however, appear to have any illusions as to the success of the undertaking. Theunis remarked in London that the situation might drive France to take desperate measures, although they would be of no prac-

[1] Bonar Law said, however, that he was prepared to yield on this point too.

tical use. In any case, she only agreed to the occupation of the Ruhr as a temporary solution, keeping a renewal of the negotiations and restoration of the Entente in view; nor did her support of the French policy prevent her opposing France later on in the matter of the Expert Committee, as she had already done with regard to the international loan. In short, our Allies, faced with a rupture and called upon to choose between two adversaries, opted in accordance with their interests, *but they would just as certainly have supported any Franco-British plan, had it been possible to fix one.*

Poincaré and Bonar Law's views were consequently the decisive factor. Let us examine their controversy more closely. The two Premiers began by accusing one another of violating the Treaty of Versailles. And, in fact, there is no doubt that neither the occupation of the Ruhr nor the Foreign Council to control Germany's finances were formally provided for in its text. But it is equally certain that, with a little goodwill, both could have been evolved from it.[1] Moreover, as we have already pointed out, the Treaty is so vague, so devoid of figures clearly defining its clauses, and of provisions for carrying them into effect, that it can only be interpreted very liberally, and applied on certain recognized lines, treating some of its clauses as a dead letter, and discovering possibilities in others which were not perceived at first.

Poincaré very justly remarked that the Allies could not allow Germany to evade her obligations during the period of the moratorium without giving them some guarantee that the payments would be resumed at the end of that

[1] The Treaty, as is well known, authorizes the Allies, in paragraph 18 of Annex II, to resort to "economic and financial prohibitions and reprisals, and in general such other measures as the respective Governments may determine to be necessary in the circumstances", without Germany's having the right to consider them as acts of war—although the question of guarantees is treated in another chapter, which only provides for the occupation of the Rhinelands. But it might be assumed from this, for instance, that Germany would be bound to look upon a bombardment of Berlin as a friendly act. The absurdity of this deduction shows us clearly that in dealing with such an indefinite text, it is better to consider what is equitable than try to take the fullest advantage of a right. It must also be remembered that before this article was drawn up, a French proposal, formally anticipating an extension of the occupation, had been rejected.

period. He did not object to the moratorium—every one agreed that it was indispensable—but he insisted that it should be accompanied by a " seizure of productive guarantees ", a term which to him meant occupation of the Ruhr. *It was an essentially inconsistent programme, for this occupation, which would completely disorganize Germany's economic system, would practically cancel the moratorium* by destroying the chance it was expected to give Germany of putting her finances on a sound footing, and being able to pay the reparations ; it was taking away with one hand what had just been given with the other. On the other hand, what would be the use of instituting guarantees ? If the idea was to take over the management of them, it would be a very difficult and risky undertaking, as we have seen since ; not only that, but the guarantees within reach of the Allies would not suffice to insure the payment of very large annuities ; in order to keep up the reparation payments by this means it would be necessary to seize others, farther away and less concentrated, to spread the occupation over a larger area, in fact, practically control the whole of Germany—in other words, to embark on enormous military expenditure, take the responsibility of keeping order in the country, expose our troops to serious danger, acquire illusory power, and merely succeed in paralysing the whole German organization.

The French Government recognized these disadvantages ; that is why they limited the area of occupation, whilst admitting that France " would not get all she wanted " by seizing the Ruhr. The best way of turning the " pledges " to account, the only way, indeed, of making them really productive, would have been to make them security for a loan. Freed from the military control which could only diminish its value, and developing its resources with German labour and under German management, whilst the Allies merely controlled the distribution of receipts, the Ruhr, with the addition of other more valuable securities, would have inspired lenders with confidence. Now in 1922 it had become more important than ever for France to raise the international loan she had always needed. The interval anticipated between the immediate advances

of capital made to "victims of devastation" and the successive annuities due from the invader had been prolonged by the delay in the payments of reparation caused by Germany's bankruptcy. The *Reich* was not for the time being in a position to insure the service of the loans issued for reconstruction, and, as the possible receipts from the Ruhr could not suffice for the purpose, France had no resource but to appeal to foreign bankers. It was consequently, as Bonar Law remarked, not a question of "guarantees", but of "credit"; or, to put it in another way, it was not so much a question of what guarantees it would suit the creditors to relinquish, as of which of them it would suit the lenders to accept. Bonar Law, who knew their opinion, could safely propose to appoint a Committee of Experts, who would point out the best securities for a loan. Paradoxically enough, *whilst Poincaré tried to make an essentially political aim appear a matter of financial interest, the bankers appealed to moral conditions. The first thing they required was a truce between France and Germany.* It was with a view to this that they asked in June for an agreement between the Allies which would insure it, and that part of the loan should be placed in France, which would establish solidarity between enemies. It was also for this reason that they had previously refused to be satisfied with the customs guarantee, fearing that if the conflict continued it would lead to such "disorganization" in Germany as to deprive this security of its value. In fact, they considered that, with the German people, liberty, stability, and hope would be a far better guarantee than military control by the conqueror. *But this was just what Poincaré would not admit, and this was why he would not listen to them,* although he admitted the necessity for a moratorium, the inadequacy of the Ruhr as security for payment, and consequently the urgent need for a loan.

If only from the financial point of view, the annuities proposed by Bonar Law would have been unquestionably more remunerative for France than the profits to be made by exploiting the Ruhr; but the *political repercussions* of the English plan seemed inadmissible to the President. He was unwilling that any of the securities to which the

general mortgage given to the Allies by the Treaty of Versailles applied, should be relinquished to neutrals ; not that he had discovered a means of turning a right to full account of which no advantage had been taken since 1919—he merely wanted to hold the threat over Germany. He rejected the proposal to set up a Foreign Finance Council, and chiefly because he knew that by agreeing to it France would lose the right to resort to sanctions on her own account. In a general way he preferred keeping his weapons to opening up a source of common profit by abandoning them. *He rejected a particular British plan, but he would equally have rejected any plan which respected Germany's integrity.* This was what our High Commissioner in the Rhinelands gave the Commander-in-Chief of the American troops to understand, before the inter-Allied meeting. "Tirard," General Allen remarked, "thinks that the French Government is not to be satisfied with an economic settlement of the reparations. He talks of the strong probability of going into the Ruhr to secure additional guarantees for whatever may be agreed upon in Brussels." [1] Poincaré himself had an opportunity of making this clear at the London Conference. In reply to Mussolini, he indicated that *even if he secured a settlement of the inter-Allied debts, in accordance with the Italian plan, and possession of various guarantees, including the State mines in the Ruhr, he would still consider military occupation of "Essen and Bochum" necessary.*

Those were Poincaré's real reasons for the step taken on the 11th of January, 1923.[2] With his Majority, it was more a case of responding to a psychological necessity, due to a habit they had acquired, to promises they had made, and fear of the electorate. For three years the people had been lulled into security by assurances that the "Boche would pay", and that it was only necessary to rely on the firmness of the National *bloc*. But at the end of 1922 they had begun to insist on a practical solution of the question,

[1] Allen, *My Rhineland Journal.*

[2] A shortage of one-tenth in the deliveries of wood, reported by the Reparation Commission, served as a pretext for the occupation. But it had been decided upon before that, for other reasons. "It is not my intention," Poincaré assured the London Conference, "to rake up things that are past, or to inflict punishment on Germany."

and all those that were still possible would have fallen considerably short of the promises made by the demagogues. The time had come when it must at last be admitted that the hopes raised could not be realized, that the reparation question could not be settled by firmness alone, but would also require tact, negotiation, and sacrifices. Would the country accept this admission quietly? Would they send back those who had so deceived them to power in 1924? *Like some unsuccessful speculator, building on a sudden turn of luck, the Majority preferred to delay the day of reckoning*, to postpone—at all events for a year—the moment when they must call upon the country itself to fill the gap and cover its own deficit. They thought an effort to face realities would be taken for an admission of incapacity, and wanted to maintain, contrary to the evidence, that firm determination could still keep material necessities at bay, the same as during the war, and to answer for the deception by a futile gesture, which looked heroic. Above all, the adoption of a solution by force, the result of which could not be easily foretold, enabled them to avoid submitting their accounts, and to start forth on the only road now open to them—the path to the unknown.

No real optimism was felt which could justify this act of mental abdication. Nothing is more curious, as regards this, than to read the newspapers and parliamentary reports of the autumn of 1922. In them we find the most responsible representatives of all the Parties speaking quite plainly of the serious objections to the occupation. Communists and Socialists, of course, condemned a policy which was the absolute negation of all their international ideals. But this time the criticism was almost as sharp amongst the Parties who, in their ordinary controversies, merely outbid one another in Nationalism. Doumergue wrote that the occupation of the Ruhr would be an "adventure", and that the country was against it. Herriot announced in the Chamber that the Radical Party advised the Government to "be satisfied with economic guarantees" without "resorting to military sanctions". Ribot formally condemned Poincaré's plan in the Senate. Paul Reynaud admitted, just as Lasteyrie had already admitted at a

Conference in November 1921, that " productive guarantees were a snare and a delusion". Forgeot proposed earlier evacuation of the Rhinelands instead of occupying the Ruhr. Tardieu, after pointing out all the difficulties in the way of turning the occupation to account, concluded that it would be better to organize what we had held for five years before taking possession of anything else, and his chief, Clemenceau, simply said : " I am afraid of the Ruhr, on account of the strikes." Barré, interviewed, advised only taking over the Rhenish railways. Finally, coming to the extreme Right, it is worth noting that Jacques Bainville wrote in the *Action Française* of December 13th : " We have never, for our part, been very ardent supporters of the occupation of the Ruhr." We learn a good deal about parliamentary morality from the fact that the step could be taken after these statements, and that most of their authors then tacitly supported it, either from patriotic amenability or consideration of their electoral interests.

Sense in which the Occupation was a Gain.

But while recognizing that the occupation of the Ruhr was, in the main, a psychological phenomenon that was to be, we also see what happy results it might have—very different, it is true, to those predicted by Poincaré. Looking at the mistake from a general point of view, a philosopher must feel that the essence of the Nationalist policy lies in following out its instinct to the uttermost, without any possibility of checking its impetus, and that it was to the advantage of its opponents to let it have full play, so that having had its own way entirely, it might be abandoned for good. If the occupation had never been carried out, it would have survived in the popular imagination as a glorious alternative to the concessions international negotiation would inevitably involve. All the illusions with regard to the victory would have centred round this fresh illusion. In default of having been compromised by being put into practice, the policy of force would have made spiritual conquests and perhaps inspired a doctrine of Imperialism for a long time to come. Victorious France

was going to sow her wild oats. At the same time, without its authors having wished or intended it, the occupation would rouse passionate resistance in Germany, which, by completing its ruin, would bring home the evils of Nationalism to the country, and show how dependent it leaves peoples on foreign countries.

In this way the occupation of the Ruhr might be regarded as a gain, in proportion, indeed, to the unforeseen difficulties it was destined to encounter, and the disappointment it was to cause public opinion in France. This was very well put by General Dawes, who, a year later, acted as Chairman of the Expert Committee. In an article of January 1923, in which he defended "France's gesture" in reply to its "condemnation by the American Press", he said that the invasion of the Ruhr by France was, in his opinion, essential, as much to bring France to realize that she could not receive more than reasonable reparations as to make Germany understand that she could not escape paying them. . . . The demonstration of the impossibility of obtaining payment of reparation directly from the German people by armed force, the fundamental good sense in business matters of France, who was in want of money, and the fact that she controlled the position, and would not have to submit to a compromise imposed on her by a third party, would all tend to convert French opinion the more rapidly to rational views. . . .[1] And, in reality, this dual evolution, inseparable from the occupation, might indeed be productive of good results, on condition of its being turned to account in Franco-German *pourparlers*, which it would at last render possible. But, when the moment came, would they be able to substitute the spirit of negotiation for the spirit of war? The worst policy may afford an opportunity for reaping good fruits, but just the worst of it is that it generally prevents their being reaped.

Failure of Policy of Coercion.

The policy of coercion was a disappointment from the first. Honest believers in the occupation had said that

[1] Barthou, *Les espérances françaises.*

whatever system of reparation might be devised, Germany would not carry it out unless fear of sanctions and of having to surrender guarantees obliged her to do so. No one will dispute this principle, provided the meaning of it is made perfectly clear. At the time when the Treaty was drafted, the question of guarantees did not arise for Germany in the same way as for Austria or former Turkey. There was no need to consider whether the country could survive, or whether it was capable of carrying out its own organization, finding administrators and setting up an authority. It was certain that Germany could do all that, provided she both wished to achieve the aim required of her and that it was possible for her to do so. The question was therefore less of finding the best means of supervising her, like newly created Austria or the half-civilized Turk, than of giving her an interest in paying off her debt. It became necessary to take guarantees after Germany had given evident proof of her unwillingness to pay, but it was chiefly necessary for a psychological reason, namely, that material security would restore the confidence in reparation which had been shaken by the Franco-German conflict.

The essential was that Germany should wish to pay off her debts, for that would make the question of guarantees —and also of sanctions—a secondary consideration. Now the London Schedule of Payments, instead of offering Germany an inducement to carry out her obligations, simply proposed to recompense her for payment of the first fifty milliards by making her pay the other eighty-two, and thus encouraged her to demonstrate her continued inability to pay, so as to make it impossible ever to discharge this second instalment of her debt.[1] In default of the financial stimulus which this system precluded, it was assumed that another could be provided by coercion. Germany, it was said, would pay rather than risk an extension of the occupation. But, after all, it was always a question of giving the Germans an argument in favour of carrying out their obligations, and there could be none if the alternative was worse than the evil. Force might back up

[1] Germain Calmette, *Recueil de documents sur la question des réparations* (preface).

a reasonable plan (which for that matter would make a resort to it unnecessary), but it is powerless to alter a vicious system.[1] Now during the whole period of occupation, the London Agreement remained in force, in default of any other French plan. The situation would have been very different if Germany had been invited to make a continual comparison between the sufferings of coercion and definite hope of liberation. Based on this solid foundation, the occupation would have produced its effect in advance, it would have been discounted and avoided. This would have been to our advantage, for, as Briand very well understood, the Ruhr was of definite value as a menace, but of very little value if the menace were realized. Had we prepared to take possession of it, making it clear that we should carry out the threat in case of refusal or evasion, Germany would certainly have agreed to pay, but this could only have been done once, and as part of a practical programme. By making it an end in itself, we delayed to that extent the general organization of reparation with which it was incompatible, as the experts recognized in 1924.

Finally, after having made arrangements to exploit the Ruhr for her own benefit, France would have no sanctions left at her disposal in case of further default on the part of Germany, unless she believed in paralyzing her altogether. The last card in the game of coercion being played, nothing remained but promises of evacuation, as a means of working on the German mind. The system of sanctions having been tried, the system of rewards would succeed it automatically. But what if the reluctance to pay persisted? In November 1923, the Ruhr being occupied and a march on Berlin appearing to be out of the question, Poincaré was obliged simply to " pocket " the Crown Prince's return and the tacit end of military control.

But, above all, if we could have given better reasons for the occupation England would have stood by us. Bonar Law said that if his plan were accepted, and Germany did not comply with the terms, the British Government were willing to agree to " sanctions of the most drastic nature,

[1] The reader will find Lycurgue's remarkable study of this subject, *Le problème des réparations*, of interest.

including military occupation of German territory outside the actual zone of occupation", even before the moratorium expired. And this great and upright man never said more than he meant. Besides, he knew that the mere fact of the Allies being agreed would be sufficient to make Germany give in. *For some years past there had been practically no difference between the official German view with regard to reparation and the Anglo-American view.* In 1921 Simons said he was willing to submit the question of fixing the amount of the debt to President Harding's arbitration, or to abide by the decision of a Committee of Experts. As an alternative to these proposals, Cuno would have accepted the verdict of the committee suggested by Secretary Hughes. This harmony worked against us; it enabled Germany to pursue a policy which aimed at setting the Allies by the ears, and provoking a conflict in which her fate would be at stake, whereas, *instead of taking the form of a coalition between our Allies and our enemies, it might have led to Germany's complying with Allied injunctions.* The general conditions of the inter-Allied and Franco-German problems were the same; the two might consequently have been solved together, but we preferred to aggravate both.

Fluctuations of French Policy.

From the time when passive resistance began, the hesitation between reparation and security which had crippled French policy ever since the armistice, and which materialized, as it were, in the occupation of the Ruhr,[1] reacted unfavourably even on the method of carrying out the operation. *As the real motive of the step taken by France could not be admitted, Poincaré explained it in his speeches, at one time as a wish to be paid, at another as a wish to avoid war,*[2] that is to say, by *the theory of the "productive guarantee"*

[1] Before its association from 1921 onwards with the question of reparations, the occupation of the Ruhr had been associated since 1919 with the question of security. A Loucheur report of February 1919 recommended it as a means of preventing Germany from re-arming. On the 24th of June, Clemenceau proposed to the Conference that Essen should be occupied after the signature of the Treaty, "to deprive Germany of the means of attacking Poland".

[2] In July he wrote to Lord Curzon that the question of security had nothing to do with the occupation of the Ruhr. And on the 7th of Novem

and *the theory of "a method of coercion"*. And whilst the first of these explanations damaged our reputation both with our Allies and Germany, and led to both the English and German Prime Ministers publicly expressing their disbelief in the desire to secure reparation being the true motive, the second gave our local policy in the Ruhr an uncertain tendency.

The fact is that the occupied area could not be made a productive guarantee and a means of coercion at one and the same time and by the same *modus operandi*. For the security to yield its full value, its products would have had to be directed to their natural market, i.e. unoccupied Germany, but the only way of reducing the latter to subjection was by cutting her off from the Ruhr. *In reality the policy pursued oscillated between these two ideals according to the circumstances.* Poincaré had not foreseen the German resistance. When explaining at the London Conference how the expedition would work out, he said: "I am assuming that the Allies have been in occupation of Essen for some time. They have received promises from the Germans, etc. . . ." His mind did not conceive of anything between these two hypotheses of occupation and capitulation. As a matter of fact, the Germans began by *withdrawing* promises; it was only at the end of a few months that they reopened negotiations with regard to reparation, and the offer they made then was the very one they had discussed with our Ambassador on the eve of the occupation of the Ruhr, and that Marx renewed when the passive resistance came to an end, the only difference being that, after the occupation, Germany appealed to the continued diminution of her capacity to pay as a reason for making reservations.[1]

When the occupation was effected, it was no longer a

ber he told the Chamber that the duration of the occupation would depend on whether a pacific tendency was shown in Germany, adding that our "guarantee of security" consisted chiefly in consolidating our present positions in the territories we were occupying. This is only one instance of perpetual inconsistency.

[1] It is true that the German offer included the proposal of a mortgage on German property, but this guarantee had been provided for in the German proposals made just before the occupation, and it only remained for us to settle the details.

question of the "military picnic", as Bonar Law put it, that Poincaré seemed to imagine it would be. It was a bitter struggle, lasting for seven months, which in itself diminished the prospect of ulterior payments. This *contretemps* led to propaganda being started which, in the end, showed pretty clearly what the real aim was. The first day-dream suggested to the public was the acquisition of decadent Germany's "real wealth". But to begin with, as long as passive resistance lasted, the "guarantee" was almost worthless: with the exception of stocks, which were limited, its only value was in the work which created the value. Consequently, even without taking the indirect losses entailed by the occupation into account (lowered value of the franc, economic upheavals, etc.), and even setting the profits against Germany's absolute insolvency (an arbitrary assumption, seeing that the German plan of December 1922 provided for the issue of internal and foreign loans during the moratorium, for the benefit of the reparations, and that Bonar Law stipulated, in his plan, for immediate deliveries in kind, and proposed to insist on the issue of a loan, guaranteed by the German industrial owners, as a condition of the moratorium, and above all, seeing that France could have obtained much more from all parties if she had really wished to reach an agreement), *the 1923 receipts would not bear any comparison at all either with those of the preceding years or those the Committee of Experts promise us in future, by other methods.* Even in considering the future development of the system, the utmost net return they can promise us [1] is an annuity of three milliard francs, that is to say, about 800 million gold marks, of which 52 per cent. could be set aside for French reparation after extinction of the Belgian priority and the cost of the American occupation. This would correspond, according to the rules for payment of interest and

[1] We are basing our argument on the statements Poincaré made in the Chamber on the 2nd of April, 1924, and taking the rate of exchange at that time. We are also making due allowance for forecasts based on a valuation of the receipts from the Ruhr during a period when the French exchange was abnormally low, and on the arbitary assumption that the M.I.C.U.M. agreements would be indefinitely prolonged. We merely adhere to them as being the most optimistic hypothesis that has been suggested.

sinking fund fixed by the London Schedule of Payments, to a total debt of thirteen milliards in gold (present value), of which seven milliards would be for France. After so much military display, and causing so much dissatisfaction in Europe, this was obviously a ridiculous result. Therefore the official propaganda tended gradually towards substituting hope of the German will changing for the hope previously held out. But as this change was not manifested either by better offers or more conciliatory language, or by increased democratic tendencies in Germany, it became absurd to extol the advantages of the Ruhr from this point of view in the same newspapers which continued to denounce the German spirit of resistance day after day.

The Ruhr as a Safeguard.

The question of security was then raised point blank. A rumour was spread that by occupying the Ruhr the Government had averted a fresh war, that by keeping possession of the "munition factories" they made a German *revanche* impossible. But from this point of view, it is quite evident that if we were going to evacuate the Rhine some day, after having combined the German people against us, roused Nationalist feeling to fever heat and brought the Nationalists back into power, and perhaps sacrificed our Allies to Germany, we should find ourselves faced with a very much increased peril on the Rhine. The idea of the Ruhr being security against invasion would be illogical unless it meant that the *occupation would be permanent*, but, in that case, we should have had to refuse the reasonable payments which would oblige us to evacuate the area as they were made, and in proportion to their amount, to make fresh claims, contrary to the assurances given by our Government, to abjure our original plan and confess that we had deceived our Allies.

As it was, Poincaré's official plan was contrary to the Treaty, if it implied that we should continue to occupy the left bank even after fifteen years in which regular payments had been made, or impracticable, if, at the end of this period, we were going to evacuate the Rhinelands and remain

in the Ruhr. Such a policy could only be justified by Tirard's theory [1] that Germany's defaults released us from our own obligations. But by not keeping within the terms of the Versailles Treaty we should lose its benefits—we should be excusing future evasion of them by Germany and absolving our Allies from their obligations. And what should we find at the end of it all? Germany setting up her munition factories farther east, or entrusting the manufacture of her munitions of war to a Russia reorganized with her help, England inclining towards this enemy group, and the Mediterranean nations, who depend on the British Fleet, and have some subjects of rivalry with us, perhaps throwing their weight into the scale against France. Is such a situation as this what could be called security?

Anglo-Saxon Guarantees.

No doubt the French Government were not looking so far ahead. They were not so much trying to organize definite safeguards as to *find a remedy for the pathological feeling of insecurity that reigned in the country, a feeling they had themselves encouraged, that it might furnish a handle for their Imperialism.* Whilst continuing to point out the permanent danger of aggression, they only claimed during their term of office to demonstrate the possession of such strength as would make any such aggression appear highly improbable. Since 1919 they have reduced the question of security to a crass alternative between military occupation and the Anglo-Saxon guarantee, just as they have reduced the financial question to a choice between integral maintenance of the sum due for reparation and annulment of the inter-Allied debts. The pact of the 28th of June, 1919, not having been ratified by the United States, and Great Britain being consequently absolved from her obligation, France, they said, was entitled to military compensation.

But let us consider a little more closely what the exact loss was to us. Wilson said, on the 9th of May, 1919,[2] that the American guarantee was a simple repetition of the

[1] Interview with the *Excelsior* in 1923.
[2] See Honnorat, *Le Problème de la Securité.*

engagement entered into by all the Powers towards one another in Article X of the Covenant of the League of Nations, the only difference being that America's intervention would be delayed in proportion to the time which would eventually elapse between the aggression and the designation of the aggressor by the Council of the League.[1] Therefore, as he explained in August, in answer to a question asked by Senator Borah, it did not constitute a legal undertaking, but a "moral obligation". Conformably with this interpretation, the American Senate did not directly discuss the Guarantee Pact; they merely rejected it indirectly with the Covenant of the League of Nations. As to the English guarantee, it still holds good, theoretically at all events, since it survives in Article X of the Covenant and in Article 44 of the Versailles Treaty, where it is stated that in case of Germany's violating the clauses providing for the demilitarization of the Rhinelands (which would be necessary in order to attack France) she "would be regarded as committing a hostile act against the signatory Powers", and it might easily have been renewed in 1922, by general agreement, but for France herself having chosen to disregard it.[2] Like the American undertaking, however, it has never, in reality, been more than a "moral obligation", liable, like all Great Britain's engagements, to be "felt" or not "felt" binding in the hour of danger, and, since the war, she has even been loth to supplement it by any military agreement which might tie her down.

It was consequently necessary, in coming to this understanding with the Anglo-Saxon nations, *to think far less of*

[1] In practice, the difference would be nil, since the United States are not in a position to intervene at once.

[2] In reality, it appears from a perusal of the Yellow Book on the guarantee treaties that, early in 1922, the British Government were disposed not only to renew their former promise of help, but also to change it, in accordance with a wish expressed by Briand, into a reciprocal undertaking concluded on a basis of equality, and subsequently even to revise their fresh plan by extending the duration of the pact from ten to twenty years, to meet Poincaré's views, adding to it, with certain reservations, the agreement between the General Staffs and the Rhinelands guarantee. The fresh general policy Poincaré embarked upon was what decided Lord Curzon not to continue the negotiation, but the latter was not abandoned until after a statement made by Poincaré to Hardinge, on the 16th of June, 1922, to the effect that "the pact, in its present form, would have no capital value for France".

the actual words of the agreements signed than of the psychological conditions which might either give them their full value, or even do duty for them or call them forth at the desired moment. Dealing with the question of the guarantee without genuinely reconciling the two policies was like trying to form an alliance without any basis, a dead letter. In fact, *France's policy made a conclusion of the pact on which she still seemed bent more and more futile, if not more impossible, in proportion as it tended towards isolation.* In defending the guarantee pact in the House of Commons in 1919, Lloyd George was able to say that there was not a man in England who would oppose the measure, that if France were attacked public opinion throughout the whole country would be with her. At the end of 1921, France's policy had already thrown so much suspicion on the Rhineland clauses of the Treaty that the British Government did not offer to guarantee them again, in their initial plan; they merely proposed to protect us as regards aggression "against French territory", and even this plan met with a hostile reception from the Liberals and the Labour Party. In March 1922 the impression made by Poincaré's policy was such that Saint-Aulaire remarked, "the agreement has certainly lost a good deal of ground latterly".[1] The occupation of the Ruhr clearly defined the situation: Ramsay MacDonald's Government gave us to understand that, while it lasted, England could not guarantee us against German aggression, and that, for this reason, the question of reparation must be settled before the question of security. This meant that, in the eyes of the English people, *the responsibility for a possible future war would be shared in advance by France and Germany, if Poincaré's policy were pursued.* Even as it was, if the Germans had been in a position to offer forcible opposition to our occupation of the Ruhr, which the British Government had pronounced illegal, the latter could hardly have considered them the aggressors; but, in addition, the opinion in London was that these events could not be without influence on the future, and no doubt future conflicts will still be traced back to them, however different they may be.

[1] Yellow Book.

England's long protest against our procedure may perhaps be the preface to a declaration of future neutrality, and this view of the anticipated distribution of responsibility, while it helps us to understand the position before 1914, shows that the question of the British guarantee cannot be settled separately, by private negotiation, but is determined from day to day by the divergence or agreement of the general policies. *England's intervention now depends entirely on certain moral factors, which also determine the intervention and authority of the League of Nations.* To co-operate with Great Britain in developing the latter would be the real way to create a firm fellowship between the two peoples which would unite them again in case of war.

Force as a Safeguard.

The French Government preferred to seek military security independently. But were they right? A direct German attack on France was, as Saint-Aulaire said in one of his despatches, "quite unlikely". There was more chance of an attack on Poland, which might lead to French intervention. And, assuming this, the question was what means we had of carrying on an offensive in Germany. That is an extension of "security" which perhaps our Anglo-Saxon Allies would not admit, and, in any case, it is a fresh and distinct question. Moreover, in a more general way, it may be said *that the former problem of security no longer exists. What goes by that name nowadays is merely preparation for mutual attack.* The technical progress made since the war has had the effect of developing methods of attack far more than methods of defence. From the aerial point of view, in particular, the best safeguard is a counter-attack, if not a preventive offensive. Fresh encouragement is thus given to aggression and surprise attacks, and the preparations for defence are more than ever insufficient to secure peace. Let us go back, however, to the "improbable" hypothesis of direct attack and of French defence, since all the arguments of our propaganda are based on it. No territorial rights on the Rhine can afford absolute security as regards this; for, on the one

hand, these rights may be rendered of no avail by the progress of science, and, on the other, they are of no value unless combined with a policy which would deprive Germany of allies, and thus prevent the risk of invasion from extending to other frontiers. We are consequently led to the conclusion that *the military problem*, like that of the guarantees, *is essentially composed of psychological elements, and that material security must only be sought within limits which render any compromise of our action, moral or diplomatic, impossible.* We know what the consequences of our occupation of the Ruhr have been as regards this.

The German Capitulation.

French public opinion, which so meekly submitted to one deception after another, is dimly conscious of all this now. During the year 1923 the people were put off with military reports. The German resistance upset the official calculations, but *a bold change of front made the fight against this unforeseen revolt seem the whole point of the occupation.* The German capitulation, which simply represented the first item of the initial programme, but after six months' delay was announced as a great victory, a ratification of the one in 1918, and it consoled the patriots who had regretted the premature armistice. The comparison was not altogether inexact, for in 1923, as in 1918, the victory was preceded by such senseless propaganda, encouraging such extravagant hopes that, when an opportunity occurred of benefiting by it to a moderate extent, the French people refused to take advantage of it. It demonstrated for the second time that *force cannot be a basis for rational solutions, for it is destructive of reason itself.*

The capitulation did not produce payments, and the resistance had necessitated a longer moratorium, although anxiety to reduce its length had been the essence of the French plan. The general situation was consequently less propitious than at the end of 1922. Yet by mere contrast with the conflict which had preceded it, and the assurance it seemed to include that Franco-German negotiations would be carried on under conditions favourable to France, it

seemed to point to a new era. Although the imminence of a political and economic crisis in Germany, and of some sort of financial catastrophe in France was evident to everyone who understood the position, the world in general was dazzled for an instant ; the franc went up ten points, and England took a step towards renewing the Entente. *That was the psychological moment for substituting unanimity for conflict.* But how could a leader so hide-bound by principles, so representative of a tradition, effect such a daring change ? How could he think of discussing or accepting the concrete offer the Germans had made, and the guarantees they proposed in May to June, 1923, which had only been received with contempt ? At the beginning of September, and again at the end of the same month, a little before, and a little after the capitulation, Stresemann, who had come into power favourably disposed towards the Entente, made us public and private overtures. But Poincaré replied that passive resistance was not actually at an end yet, and that the negotiations must be delayed for all the length of time that would be necessary to restore things to their former state. Here again, a paltry legal quibble cloaked an unacknowledged political aim. *The refusal to negotiate was not mere abstinence from action, it was a deliberate act, an event which demoralized Germany and threw her into chaos.* The fact that it was combined with the outbreak of a Separatist revolution makes its character quite clear. During the weeks spent in temporizing, Poincaré hoped that the Prusso-Bavarian conflict and the agitation in the Rhinelands *might bring about a dissolution of the Reich, which would crown the Ruhr policy and at last give it some meaning.* He told the Chamber, on the 7th of November, that the tendency towards complete separation at Trèves and in the Palatinate, seemed very strong, and said : " We must expect changes in the political constitution of the occupied territories". We know what came of that.

Evolution of World Opinion.

Poincaré not only refused to listen to Stresemann, he also vetoed the proposal to appoint a Committee of inde-

pendent Experts to estimate the German capacity of payment, which was favoured by England and the United States.[1] He gained nothing by the refusal, for a month later he had to agree to the appointment of another Committee of Experts, subordinate to the Reparation Commission: the important point was not the juridical qualifications of the Committee, but the powerful current of opinion their conclusions could not fail to evoke, and willy-nilly, he was forced to take an active part in the matter, after having made as though he would have nothing to do with it. But the delay had sufficed to change the moral atmosphere surrounding France. The great majority of the European States were anxious, above all things, to restore stable conditions by general agreement. During the first half of the year 1923, Germany had seemed to them the chief obstacle in the way of a settlement. In order to keep up her resistance, she had resorted to an inconsistent system of trying to keep up the value of the mark, and at the same time increasing her monetary circulation, a process which could only go on for a limited time. France, as we know, was determined to hold out longer, and had the means of doing so. The fate of the Rhenish-Westphalian war was consequently settled in advance and Germany's obstinacy merely uselessly delayed the time when there would be peace. The neutrals in this new war—Italy, the Little Entente, and the United States—therefore agreed to advise the Berlin Government to give in: allies of Fate, trying to hasten its course. England herself joined in exerting this pressure, for similar reasons, and also because she wanted Germany to treat under favourable conditions, before her means of resistance were exhausted, in order to limit the French victory. But Germany having ceased to be the obstacle, they looked to France, for everything now depended on her decisions, and when Poincaré refused to realize his success, international public opinion turned *against her.*

[1] In August he firmly opposed the appointment of any Commission of International Experts, even a purely consultative body, subordinate to the Reparation Commission, on the ground that it would lead indirectly to revision of the Versailles Treaty.

France's Financial Dependence.

England was at the head of this powerful coalition. In joining issue with her openly, and with everything she represented, the French Government had not realized how unequal the struggle would be. England gained by the fact that her interests coincided with those of the vanquished and other commercial nations which had suffered from our policy of coercion. *Once more, France's conflict with the first Power in Central Europe had created conditions enabling Great Britain to play the part of interested arbitrator which seemed to be her political profession; and this time she had the additional advantage of obvious financial superiority. In case of need she could afford to disregard the debts due to her, and this in itself gave them their full political value. But, above all, she was in a position to control our actions through the holders of francs.* In 1919 and 1920 our currency had been saved by the Anglo-Saxon purchases, which enabled us to maintain the exchange at a relatively favourable rate, in spite of our imports being so much in excess of our exports. But this help during a period of inter-Allied confidence must necessarily find its counterpart during a period of isolation and want of confidence. The British Government's disapproval would induce uneasiness among holders of francs, who would contrast its arguments with our policy; bear speculators would hasten to sell, thereby accentuating this perfectly natural tendency, and, moreover we had ourselves supplied just the arguments to cause a panic. Our detractors repeated what we had said as to France's very existence being dependent on the payments, and pointed out at the same time that our policy made them impossible. In reality, France could only have afforded to indulge in the luxury of trying to exact reparation by force, if she had first been able to show that she was independent of the payments. But our finances depended solely on our solidarity. Poincaré's policy disagreed with that of Lasteyrie, just as Delcassé's policy had clashed with that of General André. The Government rested on a very insecure basis, and the fact that their policy could not be carried on till the life of the two Chambers had come to an end showed

that not only the country, but the Parliamentary Majority had made a mistake in supporting it. Everyone remembers the consequences: the pound sterling at 96, then 120; the problem of reparation becoming a great International and domestic problem, through the Experts and the exchange, whilst a local solution was being sought in the Ruhr; the franc saved by suppression of the "recoverable" budget; the imposition of fresh taxation; the appeal to foreign credit, the change in our foreign policy; and the fall of the Poincaré-Lasteyrie Government.

Reversion to International Solutions.

These events had created quite a new atmosphere at the time when the Experts presented their report. In April 1924, the Government and public opinion favoured the acceptance of their conclusions. And, in fact, their plan was sound and their forecasts honest, the only fault to be found with them was that they were too optimistic. But what was this Committee, if not the one England had proposed to set up in January and in August 1923, and that the United States had recommended, through the medium of Secretary Hughes, on the 29th of December 1922? *The restrictions Poincaré wanted imposed on it were quite illusory.* The Experts were subordinate to the Reparation Commission, but no one ever doubted that the latter would endorse their plan, which, moreover, deprived it of some of its prerogatives. They were inter-Allied and not international, but the remarkable feature of their achievement is their having eliminated political feeling and dealt with the problem entirely on technical lines, just as a Commission on broader lines would have done. Their mandate was only to inquire into Germany's capacity of payment for a limited period, but, as a matter of fact, their plan covers a period of fifty years. They were prohibited from reducing the amount of the debt, but the figures they give are lower than our most moderate demands; they were not to call the London Schedule of Payments in question, but their plan upset it entirely; nor were they to fix the debt, but its total can easily be deduced by capitalizing the annuities

on a 6 per cent. basis, the rate fixed in 1921 for arriving at the capitalized value of the payments.[1]

It was Poincaré's Committee, but its methods were those of a Curzon Committee. Moreover, is not the length of the moratorium fixed by the Experts the same as Bonar Law's,[2] if not longer? Is not the annuity of two and a half milliard gold marks we are to expect after that, exactly what the British Prime Minister estimated?[3] Are not the costs of the occupation to be included in the total debt, just as he proposed? Equally, are not eventual sanctions only to be applied with the consent of the Allies and of the lenders? Finally, are not the pledges selected the very ones suggested for years past by all competent judges: the Belgian Experts when studying the question[4]; Professor Bonn in the German Press; Colson and Hoschiller in French reviews; Herriot in his speeches? *The 1924 report might have been made at any time since the Schedule of Payments came into force: the Committee could not have reached any other conclusion, for there are no others. The Dawes plan is what the French plan ought to have been on the eve of the occupation of the Ruhr.*

Poincaré as Head of an Anti-Poincaré Government.

This brings us back to the international solutions Poincaré rejected no less than three times. It was in vain that he

[1] Or at all events, the variable factor is limited in advance; it would only correspond to an actual increased prosperity reckoned in proportion to a normal period, and would act automatically; consequently it would not interfere with the issue of loans. Moreover, the Committee fix the "present value" of a considerable portion of the debt (sixteen milliards) from now.

[2] Four years, according to the two plans; possibly two years, in accordance with Bonar Law's plan.

[3] In support of his contention that the two plans were not so very much alike, Poincaré appealed to the rate of discount Bonar Law allowed, a system which, however, had the certain advantage of giving Germany an interest in paying off her debt quickly, whilst the Experts' plan might encourage her not to exert herself to the utmost, in order to diminish her payments. He said she might have paid it off in a few years; why did she not do it? The Nationalists dislike the reduced and certain figures of the present value.

[4] In case of flagrant default, the Experts' report states that "it will be for the creditor Governments, acting with the consciousness of joint trusteeship for the financial interests of themselves and others who will have advanced money on the lines of the plan, then to determine the nature of the sanctions to be applied".

tried to mask his evolution. It was evident from the composition of his new Cabinet, which included Loucheur, of Cannes and Chequers fame, and Jouvenel,[1] the man who had advised him to submit the problem of reparation to the League of Nations. Moreover, the President did not deny the fact that he had abandoned his original plan of prolonged economic control of the Ruhr. But he at all events maintained that it might be resorted to again as a sanction, in case of fresh default, and the Experts, whose hands were tied by their mandate and by diplomatic reserve, have carefully avoided dealing directly with this subject. They state, however, that their plan is "indivisible", that their forecasts are "based on the assumption that the free exercise of economic activity will not be impeded or affected by any foreign organization other than the control proposed by their plan", and they suggest a programme of financial sanctions which is very clearly in the nature of an alternative to military sanctions. The latter, as we have seen, *could only be applied by the creditors as a whole.* The policy of isolated action is dead. The President's second line of retreat was the possibility of keeping our troops in the Ruhr until payment had been made in full, whilst relinquishing the control. But this prolonged occupation would still be contrary to the Treaty; without control it would be dangerous, without occupation of the Rhinelands impossible; in any case, it would be useless and morally injurious. Finally, failing approval of the policy he proposed for the future, Poincaré claimed *absolution at all events for the past*, and tried to trace the happy result of the new policy of conciliation to the policy of coercion. He quoted a remark made by Dawes as to the benefits of the occupation, and drew down a correction from the General, who said he considered that the change in French opinion one of the greatest of these benefits. He assured Parliament that "no one now asked us to evacuate the Ruhr", and thus provoked a fresh condemnation of the French initiative by Ramsay MacDonald in the House of Commons. But what did these quibbles matter? The elections were imminent.

[1] A few weeks before he came into office, he wittily remarked, in an interview with the *Revue de France*, that, to his mind, Poincaré pursued domestic policy abroad and foreign policy at home.

The arrival of fresh men in power would allow of another policy being pursued. The Experts' conclusions had necessitated it, for the system of payment they had devised presupposed Franco-German reconciliation,[1] and this was inconceivable with a Nationalist Government in office.

The Growth of Nationalism in Germany.

Changes were taking place in Germany too, and the problem was no longer so much how to bring about agreement between the Allies, as before, as how to secure acceptance of their decisions. During the year 1923, a rapid evolution had taken place in Germany. After having first tried to evade her obligations under the Versailles Treaty, whilst pretending to adhere to it, *she has tried to deny her defeat*, since the Ruhr affair, *and create a fresh relative strength which would tell in future negotiations, thus hoping to furnish a handle for a new Treaty, tacit or formal, in place of the former humiliating Treaty.* To accomplish this, she has resorted to every means still open to a vanquished nation—carrying on diplomatic intrigues, appealing to international justice, embarking on a campaign of speculation, inflaming the minds of the people, and secretly reconstituting her army. With many Germans, "revision" is being openly substituted for the former watchword "incapacity of payment".

Passive resistance was the first manifestation of this frame of mind, whilst at the same time it helped to spread it. It was folly, and yet it was not entirely thrown away. The Berlin Government had embarked on it without any illusions as to the possible duration of the struggle, or any hope of directly getting the better of France. Rushing upon destruction, their only wish was to involve their enemy in it by rousing international feeling against her. The effects they counted upon were not produced in time to save them from capitulation, as they had hoped. The

[1] The sums earmarked for the Reparation account which exceed what can be transferred to foreign countries by deliveries or the purchase of foreign currencies, "may be employed by the Allies in bonds or loans in Germany". The complication of interests which would result could only be conceived in an atmosphere of confidence, which it would subsequently strengthen. This is the true relation between reparation and security.

advent of the Labour Party, the evolution of the Italian Government and of Belgian opinion, and the sudden fall of the franc, only took place in the course of the winter. But at the same time, these events placed France in such a position that the Experts' conclusions seemed to her a plank of salvation, and her Allies' conciliatory proposals were made as a last chance for her to seize before their attitude became one of definite hostility. "I hardly think," Stresemann said,[1] "that France can feel she has been the fortunate victor in the Ruhr struggle."

But, above all, in commemorating the anniversary of the occupation of the Ruhr, on the 11th of January, 1924, the German newspapers were able to celebrate the preservation of political unity in the *Reich*, in spite of the French attempts to undermine it, and the restoration of its moral unity. General von Seeckt's dictatorship had replaced Wirth's incompetent Government, and the Separatist Movement was at an end, no doubt for good, as the Particularists were defeated at the Bavarian elections in April. A campaign has been carried on against the Republican unity of the Weimar Constitution, but, as Leon Blum said in the Chamber, *German unity has not been affected by it*, for it has been restored in another form, far more dangerous and more formidable; *the German Republic has been the victim.*

In dealing with this new Nationalist Germany, the threat of sanctions is not at all of the same value to us as before. We have made the experiment of controlling the Ruhr, and the Experts have publicly announced that, in their opinion, no arrangement could be made for the payment of reparation under such conditions; if their plan is respected, it will deprive France of the possibility of resorting to similar measures again on her own account; moreover, every one knows that such experiments are not easily renewed. Consequently, *coercion seems out of the question for the future, but its psychological effects will remain.*

[1] Once more a man had been found to take the responsibility of pursuing a conciliatory policy. Once more he had been urged to takepart in public affairs, and then been deserted. When he found "unconditional capitulation" succeeded by "unavailing capitulation", Stresemann, too, turned against France.

III

ON VICTORY

Patriotism and the Critical Spirit.

Before concluding this book, in which too often we have only been able to deplore the past, we should like to state boldly what our hopes are for the future, in spite of these mistakes, or perhaps because of them. At a time when the world has so many problems in urgent need of solution, and it is so necessary to avoid dissension, we should be failing in a primary duty if we did not deal with the opposite side of the picture we have drawn. Many of our recent mistakes can be traced to our acceptance of false theories. The occupation of the Ruhr, the doctrine of security through strength, and belief in Germany's sole responsibility for the war, form, in particular, an indissoluble whole which must be treated as such. Existing illusions must be dispelled before there can be any improvement in our policy. Many mistaken theories will be exploded with them. When history is reconstructed, French public opinion will realize what are the true conditions of security, just as it has already discerned those on which the payment of reparations depends, in the light of the impartial investigations made by the Experts. Not till then will it be possible to establish the general peace, based on equality, so important both to Europe and France. Not till then will it be possible to resume the normal relations with Germany, of which each now feels the need, but which cannot be sincere or lasting whilst the historical enmity which now divides the two nations, persists.

Those who have acquired a sense of scientific truth in other schools, ought to make it their business to apply it

now to the study of politics, and help their country to fight against the powerful weapon of propaganda. It is everyone's duty to do this, and it is a work in which all the intellectual faculties can co-operate. The first thing is surely to create a new language, as is done by poets and philosophers in their domain, to banish verbal conventionalities, and give words their true and full meaning. It ought to be made impossible for anyone to discredit the word of a great nation by abuse of language—for instance, to renounce a proposed annexation, and try to bring it about surreptitiously by a combination of its constituent elements, separation and indefinite military control, like Austria in 1914 and France in 1923. There must be no further question of trying to achieve political aims by financial *détours*. Statements ought to be carefully compared with the facts day by day. Psychologists, for their part, might apply their most approved methods to the study of international relations. Does not the French Reparation policy, based on the dream of a Rhineland Protectorate, and shaped by regret for a Treaty which did not admit of its fulfilment, combined with an unacknowledged desire to realize it under cover of the policy, point to one of those suppressed and diffused tendencies of which Freud speaks? *When all our mental activities vie with one another in the study of politics, they will cease to be a futile game* in which stale, flat, and unprofitable conditions are discussed, nations are spoken of as though they were pawns on a chessboard, and politics, although they now control the development of art, thought, and human welfare, are regarded as the province of specialists, who are, in reality, nothing but demagogues.

Our country has nothing to fear *from this free criticism* that we should like to see, and of which we have tried to set the example. To say that in finding fault with our past policy we lower France's prestige in other countries would be cherishing strange illusions as to the international prestige of our Governments during the past few years. *The sympathy that has always been felt with France has been largely due to a hope that she did not identify herself with her spokesmen.* The feelings of impatience and hope with

which our allies awaited our elections of 1924 were sufficient proof that, in their hearts, they appealed from the leaders to the people.

Propaganda.

Moreover, everyone in France has recognized the futility of our propaganda since the war, but tried to put it down to defective organization, without venturing to admit that it was fundamentally mistaken. To try—as Poincaré did—to convince the English people by examples drawn from the execution of the Treaty of Frankfurt, propose moral solutions for economic problems, and justify his policy in their eyes by sole and strict adherence—illusory moreover—to a Treaty and Schedule of Payments they did not consider could be maintained, merely showed a complete misunderstanding of the Anglo-Saxon psychology.

But very often the statements made by our propaganda are not even consistent with the facts, which is still more serious. Of what use was it to insist that we had nothing to do with the Separatist Movements when it has been proved that the organizers of the rebellion in Bavaria and on the Rhine were paid by French agents? No one would believe us. When it was a question of disarmament, we confined ourselves to arguing that our military expenditure had diminished since the war, whilst England's had increased, without noting that this increase did not correspond with a proportionate increase in her effectives, and that the British army is mainly intended to police a vast Empire, more difficult to control than in 1924, whilst the object of ours is to protect the mother country against an hereditary foe, a menace before the war, but now provisionally disarmed; neither did we note that we were comparing a state of extreme tension in France with a system of non-compulsory service in England, nor that England's power to intervene on the continent is now very much diminished,[1] whilst our military superiority there is indisputable. With regard to unemployment, we made a great point of a slight diminution in the number of

[1] On the outbreak of a continental war, she could now only supply two divisions, instead of six, as in 1914.

unemployed in England, after the occupation of the Ruhr, but without establishing a relation of cause and effect between the two phenomena, or being able to prove that the diminution would not have been equally great without the occupation.

In this matter, and similarly with regard to putting Germany's finances on a sound footing, we always raised the question of responsibility, never that of remedies. Whatever the various causes of unemployment in England may be, is not a revival of trade a sure means of diminishing it, and, for that reason, is not everything likely to further this desirable for Great Britain, and everything likely to retard it a disadvantage to her? Similarly, however much Germany may be personally responsible for her own financial disaster, is it not evident that she could not have been saved without a moratorium and a loan? We must find more cogent arguments in future, if we want to convince the world that its interests are identical with ours. *And above all it must be remembered that France could not retain her fame in other countries, largely the result of the* 1789 *revolution, which has been copied and honoured from Pekin to Angora and Buenos Ayres, by denying the great principles which have been its strength*—respect for nationalities, liberty, and human fraternity—and playing a reactionary part in the modern world.

In France itself, patriotism must be preserved from the great danger to which it would be exposed if it were too closely associated with a certain Party, certain acts, and a temporary political leadership. If national sentiment is to preserve its nobility, it must be bound up with an ideal; we must keep our eyes fixed on the future, and our feet firmly planted on the foundation of a deliberate choice made in the past. We must see clearly that there have been different periods in our history, sometimes it has reflected France herself, at other times the real tendencies of the nation have been misrepresented by despots, or thrown into confusion by demagogues. In order to recover her moral authority, which is only too visibly diminished now, she must show the world clearly the distinction that should be made between her perennial greatness and an unfortunate temporary policy.

A really French attitude is one which faithfully represents the permanent interests and fundamental qualities of the race. Now peace, which is France's greatest interest, cannot be permanently established by military domination in a foreign country. That would be contrary to its very essence. And the ambiguous policy pursued since the Armistice, in which reparations and security have contended against one another, to the imminent peril of both, does not represent the frankness, perspicuity, and universality, which are the intellectual characteristics of our race. It is, on the contrary, an act of the truest patriotism to denounce these mistakes, and make the duplicity perfectly clear.

Nationalism.

Those who have the courage to do so must not appear to acquiesce in the fault found with them by the Nationalists, as too often happens. They must, on the contrary, answer them back boldly, and accuse those of sacrilege who wanted to claim a monopoly of the noblest of sentiments for the benefit of a narrow doctrine. They need not fear the old reproach of serving Germany's interests. Their criticisms will never do as much to encourage reaction there as the speeches of a Poincaré have done. It is time to show who the real patriots are. *The distinction between them and the Nationalists is not that the latter are more anxious than others that their country should be great—for all Parties desire that—it is that physical force seems to them the only way of achieving greatness. Such a doctrine can only be based on the most absolute pessimism.* Its adherents in Germany were in favour of ruining their country by evading their obligations, of resistance in spite of the certainty of defeat, and of a rupture in spite of the necessity for negotiation ; not being in power they were able to indulge in perfectly negative criticism ; had they assumed responsibility, they would have had to adopt the same course as the other Parties, and try to secure an advantageous compromise.

In France, their case was still more remarkable. To proclaim that the maintenance of military superiority was the only security was to confront a nation whose population

only holds its own with difficulty against a nation whose population goes on perpetually increasing, with an insoluble problem. To announce that there would be another war was to announce that our civilization would be wiped out, for there could be no other result, whatever the fate of the war might be. To look forward to a second victory merely showed preference for one degree of the catastrophe above another, for everyone can imagine the state to which we should be reduced. These men have no confidence in humanity. *We believe that they are giving up the idea of any genuine realization of their paltry ideal, but if there were only one chance in a thousand of escaping from it, this chance should still be taken, and everything should be risked for its sake.*

Moreover, we have had opportunities of seeing, since the war, how much hypocrisy and weakness there was beneath this apparent realism. The strategy invariably pursued by the small extreme Right group whose policy France more or less consciously supported, was to advocate an insane policy of reparation from which they did not expect any return, knowing that it would be automatically merged, as they wished, in a policy of German disruption. In the morning, Jacques Bainville would show clearly, in the *Action Française*, the rapid strides Germany was making towards disaster, the impossibility of any considerable payments being made, and the futility of adhering to full payment of the debt, or expecting anything from the occupation. In the evening, Léon Daudet would vote enthusiastically for Poincaré, who had come into power to carry out his mistakes. The French public hoped for reparation, and by exploiting the faith which they had helped to create, the men who did not share it led the country into a course on which it would have refused to embark, had it been better informed. The majority of the Republicans followed, or rejoined, a minority of opponents of the system. But when the extreme Right found, at the end of 1923, that they were defeated both as regards Reparation and Particularism, they refused to endorse the consequences of their policy. Without having the excuse, like the Left Opposition, that they distrusted the

Government, and were waiting for the approaching elections, the Royalists voted against the new taxes necessitated by the Ruhr policy. It then became quite evident what the secret of their agreement with some of their adversaries had been : *a tacit coalition of Parties, with a view to throwing all the blame on to foreign countries and thus escaping French interrogation.*

What doctrines could be pleaded in justification of such an attitude ? The Royalists claimed that they were guided by the lessons of history. Had they forgotten the history of Prussia, occupied and controlled in 1808 and victorious in 1813, of particularist Germany of 1870 uniting in an alliance against France, and wresting two provinces from her ? They prided themselves on giving politics absolute priority over economics, which they relegated to the inferior category of materialism, professing to feel the same contempt for them as certain spiritualists for the body.

Who does not see how illusory these distinctions are ? Nowadays, the importance of a State depends chiefly on its economic and financial power. Because she ignored these factors, France is now obliged to shape her policy under foreign pressure, she cannot ask for credit and at the same time make her own conditions. Experience has shown that it was impossible to base military domination on a deficit. As we said, in writing on the Ruhr, the National *bloc* embarked on a bold policy without creating the means of carrying it out. To have inquired into the conditions of success would have meant abandoning the policy itself. To balance the budget, it would have been necessary, on the one hand, to effect considerable economies, which could only be done by reducing military and recoverable expenditure, and on the other, to expedite the payment of reparation, in other words, to resort to international solutions, and consequently abandon the idea of isolated coercion.

The Nationalists' first aim ought to have been to free us from financial dependence, but it could not be done by their methods. Once more we had proof that a step disproportionate to the strength of a country inevitably exposes it to painful humiliation. It was Delcassé's policy that

preceded the retreat of 1905. It was Poincaré's policy that led us into having to acquiesce meekly in the Crown Prince's return, and will now oblige us to abandon control of the Ruhr, before being paid, to a Germany which has reverted to Nationalism, after having occupied it with such a flourish of trumpets when Germany was still doubtful. Is it impious to hope that France may pursue a rational policy without being driven to it by bankruptcy or a foreign menace, and that henceforth the necessary equilibrium may be brought about by free converse between the nations, and not by the rude clash of hostile forces?

Lessons of the Past: Pre-War Mistakes.

We believe that if they honestly keep this ideal in view, agreement may be reached amongst the people, on certain principles of foreign policy, irrespective of Party. A *Union Sacrée* very different to the one organized during the last few years! It will no longer be a question of opposing the temporary obstacle of sentimental contagion to realities, but rather of recognizing them, adapting the interests of the country to them, and bringing about agreement by the exercise of Reason.

For our guidance, let us consider the lessons of the origins of the war, from the standpoint of present day problems. There is talk of guaranteeing our security by renewing the former Entente. We must remember that England has always refused to bind herself by private agreements as regards the future, or to publish the general assurances she has given, or, in the end, to make up her mind in time to prevent the enemy from taking action, if the character of the conflict was at all doubtful—as it often is in these days of secret diplomacy.

This is because she always wishes to be free to judge, in the cases in point, whether the defensive spirit of the agreement signed can be preserved intact, and whether the balance of power, of which she is the guardian, is really at stake. In itself, this shows the necessity of transferring the Entente to the plane of the League of Nations, whose mission it is to maintain this balance, and which protects

it in each particular case (since all its decisions have the moral value of example), defines and publishes the controversies, and publicly designates the aggressor in good time. On broader lines, we are led to regard it as the remedy for the general causes of war that we have indicated. Isolated or divided nations sin through distrust of their adversary, and their precautionary measures assume an aggressive aspect: an international organization can alone create the atmosphere of calm in which their true intentions will be apparent. When once armaments begin to compete with one another, the pace is inevitably accelerated, and the tendency is towards war: it must be arrested from the first by a general Entente.

Democracy is incompatible with the former policy of balance of power: the League of Nations is its deliverer from this foe. Alliances which begin by being defensive easily become offensive, and, without prohibiting them, the League of Nations will deprive them of their injurious elements: secrecy, which rouses the suspicion of third parties and makes it impossible to control public opinion; the common pursuit of a political ideal which may prove to be incompatible with the *status quo*; and the solidarity of the diplomats, which generalizes private conflicts. Reduced to simple guarantees, balanced by conflicting obligations, and incorporated in a general system, they will cease to be anything more than subordinate auxiliaries of peace. *The Geneva organization seems to us the living reply to the mistakes of* 1914.

Post-War Mistakes.

Next let us look at the disastrous consequences of the false spirit of patriotism which prevailed during the years after the war. Let us compare the gestures with the results. By slighting the German payments offered, we increased the cost of reconstruction, and the consequent burden on the French taxpayer. By refusing to consent to any reduction of the debt due to us, we made a far greater reduction necessary, and thus played the game of our adversaries. The maintenance of the London Schedule

of Payments reduced Germany's capacity to pay to " zero " (Poincaré's figure). By our ruthless treatment of democratic Germany we resuscitated a Nationalist Germany. We claimed the surrender of " war criminals ", but we made no protest against their escape or their triumphant return. We looked on the charge on German property given us by the Treaty as a right so sacred that it could not be alienated for the sake of mobilizing the debt, so perfect as to be useless. We announced that the sums due to property owners, persons injured by the devastation, and those entitled to pensions, could not be reduced, but the disturbance of the exchange, which was caused by our own intransigence, was equivalent to a revision of the State obligations, or at all events it compelled us to revise them in order to meet the difficulty. We went to Genoa, and we remained members of the League of Nations, but with such bad grace, and imposing such limits on the discussions, that we were regarded as enemies of the international movement, and morally we gained nothing by participation in it. The protest we made at Washington against the Anglo-Saxon proposals of naval disarmament did not prevent our carrying them out, and we ratified the convention after having made ourselves unpopular. We dissociated ourselves from our allies, in order to escape from the tutelage of " international finance ", but we voted a fresh budget to appease it when its heavy hand was laid upon our exchange in January 1924. We occupied the Ruhr to punish Germany for her defaults under the Treaty, but we enabled her to cease her voluntary payments and escape military control in addition. The harsh Treaty made the defaults inevitable. " For without the law ", St. Paul says, " sin was dead."

If we had formulated reasonable demands from the beginning, we should not have had the break up of alliances and the successful German bankruptcy, which so quickly deprived us of the authority our armies had given us. Not only that, but was the fear of *revanche* we so widely advertised, in spite of our overwhelming success and the harshness of the Treaty, the determination not to negotiate or to realize what might have been attainable, lest dreams should be

dispelled, the continued lament over our irreparable deficit, and imploring appeal for German payments, which destroyed our credit without moving anyone, but went on till the time came when we fortunately discovered that we were perfectly capable of balancing our budget, worthy of a conqueror ?

We persisted in adhering to the traditions of the war under entirely different circumstances, exaggerating our misfortunes in order to strengthen our rights, continuing, by agreement, to support the mistakes made by the Government, refraining from criticism, without gaining in authority — *and those of the old diplomacy* — concealing our programme in the hope of varying it according to the possibilities, or else " asking the maximum in order to obtain the minimum ", and over-estimating the liability at the expense of the payments. Here again we must appeal for new times, in the name of realism.

The Future.

And now let us consider the future ; let us look the danger which is present to every mind—that of German *revanche* —full in the face, without trying to suggest provisional remedies. If it is to be regarded as an absolute certainty from this time forth, there is nothing to be done but dispense with our diplomats, close the School of Political Science, and complete our ruin by fresh armaments. We have seen already what our belief in war cost us before the war. Since then, *the representation of Germany in the Press and in public speeches has been even more clearly artificial ; it has been the pivot of a certain policy, an image that had to be set up, to enable certain rites to be performed round it.* We remember having heard Herriot rouse a perfect storm in the Chamber by saying that there were " two Germanies ", yet this was a very moderate estimate ! The truth is that Germany's resistance was an indispensable factor in the Rhineland policy. Everything was done to encourage it, more or less deliberately. When one considers this antagonistic solidarity between Nationalisms—fortunately balanced by the solidarity between democracies—and when one

remembers that the increased warlike spirit in Germany, caused by the Ruhr policy, subsequently justified the latter in French public opinion and secured its support, that belief in danger was all that held the *Union Sacrée* together, and that Germany's bad faith was the strongest argument against the Left, one may well wonder whether certain Frenchmen were not thinking of Tirpitz and Westarp when they secretly recited Fortunio's song.

To satisfy ourselves that there is nothing unconditional in the German desire for *revanche*, any more than there was in the former desire for aggression, we need only note that, according to the evidence of all qualified observers, there was no feeling of resentment against France immediately after the war; this is admitted by Hindenburg himself. It increased with the policy of isolated action, whilst the old resentment against England died out, and a feeling of friendship for the United States developed; compare also the revolt of the working classes against the Kapp *Putsch* in 1920 with their submission to the policy of resistance and von Seeckt's dictatorship in 1923. It is most probable that different causes would produce different effects, and that a change in France might lead to a change of the same kind in Germany. *It is to be hoped, at any rate, that the evolution of the two nations will be parallel, and their tendencies of the same nature.*

In the judgment of history, the fact of their having created such a situation that Nationalism was revived in Germany at the same time as Radicalism and Socialism in France, will not be accounted one of the least of the mistakes made by the National *bloc*. If this contradiction were to persist, the historian might some day write that France began by showing herself incapable of profiting by Germany's hesitation, and then became conciliatory when her adversary had ceased to be so. It would be a very sad day when the friends of peace, having been reduced to silence for ten years, could no longer conscientiously do otherwise than swim with the tide against a definitely hostile Germany. The Ruhr policy has been particularly harmful in this respect, for there is something irreversible in it. On the one hand, our enemies' feelings towards us

can never be the same as before, and France will have to reckon with that. On the other hand, the opponents of the adventure, who may come into power through its failure, must accept it as a *fait accompli*, if they take office ; they must pin their Reparation policy to it from the first, on pain of having to abandon it altogether, and adhere to it at all events partially, whilst disapproving of it. As it is, the Radicals, who were against it, did not feel that they had any right to cripple the action taken by France by opposing it after the event. There is once more something anti-Republican in this high-handed policy, embarked upon against the wish of part of the nation, and without the majority having had any opportunity of sanctioning its true aims, which were concealed from them.

Fortunately, the situation is not at all desperate yet. We are even inclined to consider that its evolution depends largely on us. The Nationalist policy merely consists in drawing the conclusions from initial and, moreover, tendencious evidence of a hostile feeling in Germany. We take a higher view, and believe the right policy is to deal with cause and effect simultaneously. Measures of precaution are not enough ; the aim should be to determine the adversary's action. A desire for *revanche* and aggression, or a desire for peace, depends on motive power that can be created or eliminated. We believe that this is particularly true of our country to-day. *The first military Power on the continent in a great measure decides the general orientation ; the others are guided by its procedure in arranging their own.* This is why we must hold France mainly responsible for the preservation of peace, from a philosophic point of view, just as we held Germany responsible for the war ; but as she still has the part to play, we must also put more faith in her.

Revanche Spirit in Germany.

What is the real character of the belligerent spirit on the other side of the Rhine now ? People are so obsessed with the idea of justifying the belief in the " eternal Germany ", that they are very often inclined to regard her display of

resistance as a continuance of her pre-war Imperialism. In reality, it is quite a different thing. The aggressive tendencies displayed by the Germany of 1905 were the outcome, from the military point of view, of her economic expansion, and the habit of well-being and success, which blunted their sense of external resistance, accounted for the docility of the people. In 1914, the predominant feeling was that their security was threatened. In 1923 the Germans might have taken up arms in response to a stronger feeling : anxiety to escape from famine and dismemberment, or even simple despair. That was the nature of their opposition to the French policy. With regard to the Treaty of Versailles itself, Germany's feelings were not unlike those of France with regard to the Treaty of Frankfurt. Not that the reconquest of Alsace-Lorraine could inspire a policy in Germany, as it had done in France. The *Reich* assuredly felt her diminished prosperity, liberty, influence, and diplomatic prestige, far more humiliating than her material losses. But, at all events in the east, this feeling was inseparable from the territorial loss, which was a source of irritation both because it made Germany economically dependent and benefited a nation she considered inferior, and because it involved the separation of a certain number of Germans from the mother country. Therefore we find Germany avoiding, as France had done formerly, anything that might seem like a fresh ratification of the Treaty. The policy of executing it was as unpopular as the policy of reconciliation before 1914, and for the same reasons.

The necessity for recognizing the Treaty at the same time as the pact, was a strong argument for all the opponents of the League of Nations in Germany. France had similarly opposed proposals of a continental Entente, which would have bound her to acquiesce in her defeat. In short, both had successively refused to guarantee the frontiers, or, at all events, though Germany proposed the signature of a pact of non-aggression to France, on the eve of the occupation of the Ruhr, she took good care not to propose giving her Polish neighbour the same assurance : the members of the Right in the Central Government had opposed it. Just as France hoped in some mysterious way that

Alsace-Lorraine would be restored to her through her alliances, her enemy is now waiting for Poland to break up of her own accord, in order to profit by that. Whether this hope becomes a vague dream, or the basis of a political offensive, depends on our attitude. *In Germany too, regret for the past must be actualized by present suffering, if it is to determine a hostile policy.* If she has the feeling, like France before the war, that the Treaty signed is not merely the liquidation of a disastrous war, but the beginning of a tradition of inequality, a defeat incessantly renewed in daily political life, then the mere fact of our having created a misunderstanding of this kind by our folly, as Germany did, would make our position very dangerous, for it would not even be backed up, as hers was, by the development of an essential superiority after the victory. Now, as regards this, the character of the Versailles Treaty is quite peculiar. It extends into the future, organizes several decades, establishes prolonged uncertainty on the frontiers, indirectly regulates the work and the means of subsistence of individuals, and calls for a consistent policy.

If it is to allow of military demonstrations, perpetual intrusion into Germany's affairs, and the destruction of her economic life, she may perhaps feel it impossible to put up with it to the end. Even now the situation is such that certain Nationalist elements hesitate to acquiesce passively in a future of indefinitely prolonged slavery, and contemplate a foolish step, which they think may deliver them from it. The day when the reparation obligations shall have been fixed, accepted by Germany, and incorporated in her budget, the day *when it will no longer be a question of a war of emancipation, but only of a revanche war,* no longer a choice between two hypotheses of despair, but between an acceptable situation and the unknown, on that day, no doubt, many Germans will be found to forsake the Nationalist standard. Consequently, assuming that our policy encourages this evolution, it may reasonably be hoped that the moment Germany finds herself more at liberty to prepare for war, she will have lost her best reason for doing so.

Moreover, it must not be supposed that our enemies are

hopelessly belligerent. All those who really understand the conditions on the other side of the Rhine have told us that the average German is docile, gregarious, and amenable to authority—these are dangers in themselves—but does not like war. It is true that there is *a super-abundance of energy* amongst this growing people which, if it does not find economic outlets, may again resort to invasion. But it is for us to open up other paths for it. In a Germany allowed freedom to expand, we should soon see business becoming the fashion instead of the army, the national qualities of method and discipline transferred to another plane, and political antagonisms dying out.

It would be a still greater mistake to suppose that hatred of France would persist in Germany in any case. Our neighbours are far less persistent in their antipathies than we are, and more amenable to suggestions as to their interests. We have already pointed out how they have varied psychologically during the last few years. No doubt it will be the same in the future. In this connection, it is particularly curious to note the attitude of Ludendorff and Stinnes, for it was very remarkable, and it represents the state of mind of many of their compatriots. The one proposed a Franco-German military alliance against Russia, in 1920, and offered to serve under his conquerors, before becoming the champion of their adversaries in 1923. The other successively opposed and favoured the payment of reparation, advocated an economic Entente, and preached resistance to the occupation, according to the view he took of his interest, and that of his country. Like this General and this industrial magnate, many Germans will be *Francophil or Francophobe according to what is suggested by a practical spirit of patriotism*, which *looks to the main chance*, and if the greatness of their country is associated in their minds with a Franco-German Entente, they will be enthusiastic in support of the idea.

The League of Nations.

But above all, before the possibility of *revanche* can take definite shape, Germany will have joined the League of

Nations. We are confident that she will take this course, because we know that it will be primarily in her interest to do so. The Nationalists themselves might advise it, as the best means of restoring her diplomatic authority, of resuming her place amongst the nations, and, in case of need, preparing her *revanche* in this way. But when the time came for her to wish to take advantage of her rehabilitation to carry out belligerent aims, she would no doubt discover that she was bound by her undertakings and those of other nations, *caught, in fact, in the snare of peace.* In fact, it would only be necessary for the League of Nations to function properly for a few years, with the support and co-operation of all, to enable a great deal of progress to be easily made which now seems Utopian.

Attitude of the United States towards the League.

What fault is there to be found at present with the Geneva institution ?

Its having been rejected by the United States, whose help is so indispensable to us ? We need only to go back to 1919, and recall the reasons for the American decision, to be sure that it is neither absolute nor irrevocable. The defeat of the Democrats at the November 1918 elections, which preceded Wilson's departure for Paris, did not at all mean that the American people were opposed to the idea of a League of Nations. They were, on the contrary, almost unanimous in hoping for it, as one of the chief results of the Conference.[1] If they afterwards refused to adhere to the Covenant, this was because the League seemed, on the one hand, to set up super-Government by an oligarchy of victorious Powers, and, on the other, it imposed on them the moral obligation of military intervention in case of violation of a Treaty, many of whose clauses they considered unjust and ephemeral.[2] If the League of Nations were enlarged, the Treaty amended in practice and accepted by all, and European harmony restored, no doubt the same

[1] See Lansing's book.

[2] Another circumstance must of course be also taken into account, namely, the resentment roused by Wilson's personal policy, his ostracism by the Republicans, and even by his own colleagues.

feeling would be shown as in 1918. This evolution can, moreover, be very much facilitated by the European Powers.

The League of Nations ought to be shaped in accordance with the wise conceptions Lansing in vain tried to substitute, during the Peace Conference, for Wilson's personal ideas, which were too bold. At present it cannot, in a general way, be more than a legal instrument of conciliation and arbitration ; it is not an international military Power. General intervention in the case of all aggression ought to be the aim to pursue, but effective guarantees could not as yet be anything but incomplete and regional.[1] In this respect, the draft of a Treaty of Mutual Assistance, elaborated at Geneva in 1923, represents a happy transition. Side by side with a general guarantee, it organizes more precise and more limited guarantees, which will only tend to be extended in proportion as individual States voluntarily adhere to it ; and, even in the general pact, the military intervention provided for will not be demanded, in principle, from High Contracting Parties in another continent. *The elaboration of this scheme, added to the restrictive interpretations applied to Article X, and to the development of the moral authority of the League of Nations, is characteristic of an evolution in which the general territorial guarantee provided by the Covenant has been very much thrown into the shade, without the League having become less efficacious. Consequently, the great danger the United States might have feared is tending to disappear.*

Now all American Governments have declared in succession that they were ready to co-operate in any way which would not pledge them in advance to military intervention. In an interview of the 20th of September, Harding, the Republican candidate for the Presidency, after condemning military alliances, said it did not follow that an association

[1] As we have already explained, these regional Ententes, placed at the service of the League of Nations, and not of Governments, will be very different to the old alliances ; we ought even to wish them to be concluded between ex-enemies. Let us, moreover, remember that from the day when Germany is received into the League of Nations, or even only into the Pact of Mutual Assistance, we owe her our guarantee, without her having any reciprocal obligation, if her disarmament has then been effectively carried out. (Article 17.)

or agreement with Europe was out of the question, and again, on the 4th of March, after his election, he said that the Americans were resolved to take part in working out plans with a view to mediation, conciliation, and arbitration. Before his death, he acted on these ideas by recommending that his country should send a representative to The Hague International Court of Justice. It may therefore reasonably be hoped that when the League of Nations shall have given clear proof of its *moral and universal* character by making arbitration compulsory, by revising Article X, and by admitting Germany to membership, the American Government will see more advantages and fewer risks in joining it.[1] They will then abandon their isolation, just as they have already withdrawn their refusal to take part in the inquiry into the Reparation question, since the restoration of an Entente between the Allies.

Sanctions.

Not having an international army at its disposal? To attempt to answer this question at once would be to shatter the Geneva institution from the start, and to no purpose. We know that at the time of the Corfu affair in 1923, the whole British Fleet would have been at its disposal in case of need. In similar circumstances mandates could always be given to the States most interested in restoring order, or most capable of doing so, and to organize this intervention beforehand, is precisely the object of Mutual Assistance Treaties. Besides, without going so far as this, the blockade sanction—which is obligatory, according to the Covenant, applicable on the first threat of aggression, and more capable of being carried out collectively—would be calculated to make the delinquent hesitate. In fact, when we remember the conditions of the last war, we are inclined to think that it might have been shortened, and its issue imperilled from the first, as far as Germany is concerned,

[1] Moreover, the case of the United States is not isolated. For instance, the Dutch and Columbian delegates, who objected to the Mutual Assistance scheme at the 1923 Assembly, indicated that their objections would be withdrawn if the League of Nations were first strengthened by the development of arbitration and the admission of States which were not members.

if trade relations between her and the rest of Europe had been broken off entirely. This *evolution of the idea of neutrality*, which is the first result achieved by the League of Nations, already seems an essential factor.

The Super-State.

Being nothing at all, unless a Super-State, which the nations will always refuse to recognize? Fortunately, the question will never be so crudely put, and it will be solved gradually. *The sovereignty of the States will remain intact theoretically, but in practice it will be limited by the quasi-irresistible trend of international opinion.* Most of the Geneva delegates must already have been given some liberty of action by their Governments, for there are instructions which could not be carried out after certain meetings and certain striking demonstrations of European feeling. Have we not had an illustration of the compelling influence of simple impartial advice, in the report of the Committee of Experts in 1924? The French Government knew very well beforehand that they would have to comply with it, hence their reluctance to make it possible.

Practically, the mere creation of a moral current, with its consequences, uncertain no doubt, but also incalculable, would be sufficient to deter the aggressor. It sufficed to make Mussolini withdraw in September 1923, in spite of the League of Nations having functioned so imperfectly, in spite of its conflict with the Ambassadors' Conference over the question of competence, and in spite of France's doubtful, if not hostile, attitude. The question of sanctions must not be overlooked, but it is permissible to hope that it may never be raised.

In order to judge how efficacious the purely moral rôle of the League of Nations will be, we need only remember the care all the Governments took in 1914 not to face the war without securing the maximum of foreign alliances, and of internal unity. How will they deal with this problem in a Europe deprived of the old diplomatic system, and provided with a League of Nations? To create a favourable atmosphere, and avoid being attacked, if not by all

the members of the League, at least by those who would carry out the sentence of the Council, it will be in the interest of the aggressor not to go to war except under the conditions which the Covenant lays down as expressly authorizing it, that is, after efforts at conciliation have been made, and three months have been allowed to elapse after the verdict; it is very unlikely, however, that it would then be resorted to, deprived of all the advantages of surprise, and with the moral authority of the arbitration exerted against it. Will it be said that, knowing of these obstacles beforehand, the aggressor would prefer to startle the world by a brilliant *coup*? *In these days of democracy and public opinion*, however, *it is very difficult to conceive war breaking out without any reason or prior dispute, without tension or public excitement, without mobilization of the moral and material forces—and consequently without the delay which would enable the other Party to appeal to international procedure.*

If a really complete and impartial League of Nations exists when a fresh conflict arises, a League with a whole tradition of equity behind it, will it be as easy for a Government to refuse to accept its judgment as it was for the German Empire to refuse the diplomatic Conference proposed in 1914, and to persuade the people that they were in the right? Will there again be a divided Europe, in which all the combatants believe they are exercising a legitimate right of self defence? We think not. The mere existence of the Geneva institution will put a spoke in the wheel of the propaganda which is mainly responsible for conflicts, and provide the pacifist majorities which exist in every country with a basis of resistance to the belligerent minorities.

Thus, after being brought about with difficulty, peace may perhaps develop rapidly, for some problems will cease to exist in proportion as others are solved, and the international spirit will grow. The League will then be able to start its real work. It will have the difficult task of adapting old treaties to constantly changing conditions. It must see to the maintenance of the territorial *status quo*, for if this principle were abandoned, there would be endless

confusion, but at the same time it must endeavour to eliminate what is unjust and unreasonable in the last Treaty imposed by force, to promote free trade, economic and financial solidarity, and the protection of minorities, minimize the significance of frontiers by degrees, so that their imperfections may be forgotten, and see that, in distributing the wealth of the world, each State has the share proportionate to its needs, and calculated to assure it suitable conditions of life.

Peace the Offspring of War.

Is this too ambitious a dream? We believe that it is more a question of an inevitable evolution, and that it is only necessary to advise France to anticipate it, and be the foremost of its supporters, in order to benefit by it. History may perhaps say that general peace was brought about by general war, and that the peoples were bound to discover by degrees the "great illusion" of which Norman Angell speaks; that the Treaty contained in germ the ruin of the European combatants, and arbitration by the creditor and pacifist Powers; that the time was pre-ordained when an appeal would be made to foreign experts and mediators, not through higher love of peace, but to escape from misery; that the Franco-German Reparation conflict, having reached an *impasse*, was bound to be solved by international collaboration, and to give life to the League of Nations after having paralysed it; that the latter, contrary to first appearances, would finally prove to be the only practical part of a Utopian Treaty; that the out-bursts of Nationalism which succeeded the war were only the last reverberations of the world-wide storm, and that the signs of a new future were to be sought elsewhere: in the vision of European solidarity, in the *revanche* of the western democracies. Perhaps it will say that in 1918 and in 1923, peace was making irresistible progress, but that the great news had not yet reached the peoples, like the news of the death of God of which Nietzsche spoke, or the light of certain stars that exist, but are still invisible.

Since the war, the action of the Governments has in

reality only consisted in *delaying* the necessary events. In 1914, Grey was right in predicting that the Labour Party would come into power, but this prophesy was only fulfilled in 1924. Economists had said that, in case of a long war, all the continental States would be bankrupt; and people laughed at the idea, until the time came when, through the monetary depreciation, they were, in fact, all bankrupt. If the Governments had honestly pointed out from the beginning what the war and its consequences would be, they would perhaps have risked a revolution. They preferred to postpone the day of reckoning, and revel in success for a time, as though it were unalloyed, but the war will none the less produce all its effects, *until we achieve true peace.*

France and the League of Nations.

The delay might have been useful, however, for immediately after her military triumph, at a moment when the peoples were still influenced by it, *France had excellent opportunities for private negotiation.* There was a time, as we have seen, when a change in our policy might have induced a Conservative Government in England to enter into an alliance with us. There were also times when the circumstances seemed to point to the advisability of a direct Franco-German agreement—to begin with, when a proposal was made to pay reparations in kind, which did not concern England, and subsequently when we were in occupation of the Ruhr. The first of these solutions would have been illusory enough, in our opinion, and the second could only have been an auspicious prelude to a more extensive arrangement. Anyhow, these opportunities were neglected, they no longer exist, and we now have to grapple with the international problem. There is no occasion, we think, to regret it, for France has a direct interest in all that can promote the most comprehensive union of peoples. *Like all nations whose territory is not too limited for their forces, she must try to preserve the status quo, and to fix it on the morrow of a victory, rather than leave it to be modified by degrees in accordance with the true ratio of strength, and*

she must try to have it guaranteed by as many Powers as possible.

Now this is precisely the object of the League of Nations. If Germany honestly adheres to this association permanently, she will have to make considerable sacrifices, she must recognize the frontiers fixed by her defeat, and limit her increasing expansion in advance. It is far easier for us to entrust the League with the evolution we have achieved and our reconquered unity. We are certain of the support of a large majority in Europe for our essential objectives, namely, that the 1919 frontiers should be guaranteed, Germany's armaments controlled, and a considerable foreign debt exacted from Germany. In reality, none of the victorious or newly constituted nations wish to have any territorial alteration made, nor does any nation at all wish for a renewal of war, and they would all be glad to be protected against German competition by the reparation mortgage, if this can be done without at the same time destroying the purchasing power of seventy million consumers. In all these matters, *we can get France's true policy carried out, with greater authority, by the League of Nations.*[1]

France's Relative Strength.

Only, if we want to share in these advantages, we must proportion our victory to our real forces, not to the evanescent prestige of an arbitrary text. The importance of a country has always depended, in the long run, on the degree of its internal strength. Before we can resume our expansion, we must solve our domestic problems, deal with the question of repopulation, and restore economic and financial equilibrium. Until we have accomplished this, we must be satisfied to pursue a moderate foreign policy, and be prepared to compromise. Moreover, whatever progress we may make towards recovery in the future, there are certainties to be reckoned with as a result of the past. France has lost her position as a creditor nation;

[1] The League of Nations has already effected a partition of Upper Silesia very similar to the one urged by the French Government, and has recommended the problem of reparation and the problem of inter-Allied debts being dealt with together, conformably with our interests.

in order to restore it, and therewith recover her freedom, she must welcome the advent of foreigners and their capital, and relinquish a share of the national patrimony to them. The difference in the birth-rate since the beginning of the century makes it clear that, even if the French curve goes up, the inequality of strength will increase to our disadvantage during the next few decades, particularly with regard to Germany and Italy, and if it remains stationary, this will be multiplied in each generation by a geometric process.

Here, again, *foreign co-operation*, the importation of foreign labour, is what will enable France to increase her wealth. Since she lacks quantity, she must develop quality, and carefully safeguard her own particular civilization, which will be menaced by the demographic disparity, restricting her patriotism to the defence of her culture. By keeping up our intellectual traditions we shall preserve France's prestige, and be able to inculcate them into her newly adopted sons. *But this pursuit of moral greatness is not compatible with a policy of isolation and conquest.*

On the contrary, it will call for apparent sacrifices, and necessitate breaking with past prejudices to begin with. France must, on reflection, make up her mind to abandon the policy she has pursued since 1919, and efface it from her traditions. She must accept, instead of trying to overstep, the limits imposed on her victory by the Treaty. She must act up to her vocation as a European nation, and recognize the authority of the International Councils, which will be more numerous than ever during the next few years.[1] She must abandon an old contest, and decide in favour of a foreign as against a French view, namely, in favour of substituting the American idea of a Society open to enemies, neutrals, and small Powers, for Clemenceau's League of Nations, which aims at perpetuating the supremacy of the Allied Great Powers, and prolonging the chances of war. Finally, and this is of paramount importance, she

[1] In 1922 experts throughout the world pronounced unanimously against the French view, on definite points, but opinion in Paris seemed hardly shaken, preferring to believe in an immense coalition of interests against France than in the existence of a universal truth. If this state of mind were to persist, then there would be no international future for us.

must be satisfied to see Germany recover, and to live on a footing of equality with her. That is necessary, to enable the latter to make the reparation payments. It is necessary, so that there should be no further *need* for *revanche*, and it is necessary in order that the League of Nations may answer to its title, and be able to play its full part.

Reversion to War Aims of 1918.

This may at first seem insisting on the necessity for a radical evolution, but, in reality, *it is merely a question of reverting to the inter-Allied spirit of Versailles and to our war aims of* 1918. Were not the most important provisions of the Treaty formulated simply as provisional guarantees, pending the organization of an international system: the Franco-Anglo-American Pact as a means of tiding over till the time when the development of the League of Nations would make it superfluous, Allied control over Germany as a preparation for that of the League, German disarmament as a prior condition of general disarmament? And was not the Armistice on which the Treaty was based formally associated with President Wilson's generous ideas, with which first the Allies and then their enemies had agreed? Let us recall the principles which have been forgotten: "There shall be no annexations, no contributions, no punitive damages." "There shall be no private leagues, or alliances, or covenants and understandings within the general and common family of the League of Nations." "Equality of trade conditions must be established among all the nations consenting to the peace and associating themselves for its maintenance." "Guarantees will be given and taken for the reduction of armaments to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety. . . ." How can such a faith as that be abandoned? It is the very one for which the combatants died in the trenches. When they acclaimed President Wilson as the man who advocated a just peace, when they called in their hearts for a League of Nations, they already had a vague intuition that war is not brought about by the errors of only one party, that, in order to prevent it, peoples must be insured against their

own Governments by a higher tribunal, and must wish, not for one national will to prevail, but for the elaboration and acceptance of a common truth.

During the war they had been able to impose their idealism on their Governments, and there was a strong belief in a new future. But the men of the past—in France, the very ones who had allowed the war to come about—disregarded those high hopes, and went back to the old ways. They may have thought to bring us down to earth from the clouds. But does not the illusion consist rather in aspiring to found peace on a display of isolated strength which necessarily calls forth a higher bid, and only reverses the military position, whilst aggravating the political problem? This old-fashioned system is not only bad, but nowadays it is impracticable. Even under Poincaré's Government it was found necessary to embark on a course which will end in our no longer being entirely independent. According to the Treaty of Mutual Assistance of which we have spoken, and which the French delegates took a prominent part in drafting, every guarantee given to one of the combatant nations must be conditional on a reduction of its armaments. This is a first recognition of a more general truth, on which the French people should meditate, namely, *that it is by making internal reforms, which certain persons will represent as sacrifices and humiliations, that we shall show ourselves deserving of the extraneous help which is so indispensable to us.*

Domestic Policy.

Such an evolution would naturally be accompanied by a change in our domestic policy—but we think this should be welcomed by all the Parties, except perhaps the Royalists, who prosper better when there is a crisis. In reality, *the hybrid system which has functioned for the last few years combined the disadvantages of all the régimes without satisfying the partisans of any of them.* We have had a Government supported by the Right, but without the advantage of authority, since they owed their strength to a Nationalist current of which they were as much the slaves as

the creators. They could outdo it, and risk adventures, but they could not shake off its yoke in order to insist upon practical solutions. It was obvious, in January 1924, that they were only capable of taking energetic steps under pressure of panic. For years the financial problem had been allowed to grow worse and worse, so much so that even the success of their Reparation policy would not have sufficed to solve it, and that a crisis was certain in any circumstances.

It was well known, as far back as in 1923, that even the whole twenty-six milliard gold marks we claimed would not balance the cost of reconstruction and pensions. And yet the "recoverable" budget was maintained, and we continued to borrow. But when the pound sterling went up six points in one day, a fresh financial system made its appearance. . . . What could a monarch have done in a country where over-excited public opinion was paramount? Or a dictator, who had nothing to rely upon, as a remedy for the slow methods of Parliamentarism, but the very passions which doomed his action to failure? *Above all, the democratic régime that was assumed to have been maintained during the "National" years was an illusion.* To escape control, the Government had taken advantage of the *Union Sacrée* atmosphere and of the complexities of the situation, which made it easier to cheat public opinion, just as they had availed themselves of the methods of secret diplomacy before the war—and even this itself was resorted to again in the Rhinelands and Bavarian policy, whose history must be written some day.

So long as there are not more independent Press organs, to explain the problems of foreign policy to the public as they really are, and not as interpreted by the Government, so long as budgets are not published, which are honest both in their structure and in their estimates, and accounts are kept open for previous financial years, so long as the state of the Treasury is concealed from the public, so long as officious agents can conduct a policy in foreign countries of which our diplomatic representatives know nothing, and which our Governments can subsequently disavow, there will be no true democracy in France. But a change in

our morality will do more to give it its real character than these material changes. The narrowness, the prejudices, and the tendency to tyrannize, that revolutionary France fought in clericalism formerly, have now been transmitted to Nationalism : the proof of this is that we find these old and new forms of reaction instinctively forming groups. But the command has changed hands, and Radicalism is mistaken in continuing to pursue its former enemies.

The true religion of our day is the worship of country ; this is what we now have to purify by getting rid of its bad servants. It is against this new intransigence that a Voltaire would claim freedom of thought, against this new dogmatism that a Galileo might proclaim universal economic and psychological laws. *At present the nation is ruining itself for the sake of its religion.* Everything done to exalt the country leaves it exhausted, impoverished, and dependent. The patriotic efforts made outstrip and defeat their own object. On the other hand, *there are many who in their hearts wish for a régime of international equity that the statesmen have not been able to establish. It will be for our generation to give substance to these unformed aspirations.* There is nothing in this incompatible with any republican doctrine, and the Conservatives themselves must realize that they can only preserve the social order by effecting a change in our international relations. Capitalism coupled with periodical war is just as impracticable as Communism, and, moreover, leads straight to it. The Left *bloc* will only be overthrown if it is deprived of its monopoly of the spirit of peace.

In an epoch when there are so many interests in common, it is natural that the private interests of a nation should sometimes seem to be at variance with its European interests, in which case true progress should be sought in bringing these conflicting tendencies into harmony. This conflict ought to be a subject of rejoicing, for it is the great reason for the League of Nations, which will adjust it or perish. *But if it continues to be, as now, a conflict between conceptions of society, if we cannot get beyond the pre-war idea that nothing but class interest can be stronger than national hostilities, it is more than probable that the*

rapprochement between the peoples, which is inevitable, because it is a vital necessity for Europe, will be brought about to the advantage of the Parties of the extreme Left, and will be accompanied by a social revolution. The remedy is boldly to dissociate war from property; to place development of the League of Nations at the head of all the electoral programmes. As long as this is not done, those who love both their country and peace too well to be able to think of the one without the other will be naturally inclined to support the true protectors of the latter, whatever their interests, their traditions, and their natural preferences may be. And then the case of a Forgeot, deserting his electors of the Right because he approved of the foreign policy of the Left, will no longer be isolated.

Political Evolution.

Fortunately, everything seems to point to the probability of this evolution being slow enough to be effected without being too plainly associated with the triumph of any particular electoral group. It is more likely to come about *by suggestion from the country to the Parties, who will maintain their traditional differences, merely shifting their centre of gravity.*

For one thing, future Governments will have to suffer from the consequences of the old propaganda for a long time to come. If sensible men take office, they will not attempt to carry out all that they would like to do, otherwise they will pay for it by defeat. Ramsay MacDonald's Government gave the world an excellent example of wisdom, in analogous circumstances. In order to achieve the object in view, it would be inadvisable to make too much point of it at first, for that would rouse resistance. To abandon the Treaty of Versailles would not benefit anyone now; the German Government itself appeals to it, and defends it against its Opposition, because it would guarantee them against us if it were observed in the spirit as well as the letter. The extensive revision that has already been contrived within its framework shows that it would be easy to give some of its clauses a new interpretation, without

abandoning the beginning of order which it represents, and going back to chaos. As regards this, the conclusions reached by the Expert Committee, which are in conformity with the Treaty, but at the same time opposed to the idea of " punitive contributions " and to the policy of productive guarantees, show us the right course to pursue.

It will also be necessary to find means of accustoming public opinion to the evacuation of the Ruhr: by distinguishing between economic and administrative occupation and military occupation, by abandoning the first when an international settlement of the Reparation question has been reached, and the second after an international settlement of the problem of security. The necessary concessions ought to be made, as it were, to our Allies or to the League of Nations, and passed on by them to Germany. These little devices are the stock in trade of politics, and our Parliamentarians are clever enough to be able to carry them out without difficulty.

Then again, as regards foreign countries, our Governments will necessarily have to accept a certain amount of responsibility at first for the mistakes of their predecessors in office. They should try to benefit as much as possible from the bad policy of the last few years before finally winding it up. The occupation of the Ruhr has clearly caused great inconvenience in Europe. We are suffering from it ourselves, but others have suffered still more. England, in particular, is almost as much interested as Germany in seeing it come to an end. It has even been paradoxically, but ingeniously, suggested that the Ruhr was occupied in order to oblige her to abandon her claim on us. Anxiety to put an end to the European trouble may be a reason for making concessions to our legitimate interests, but it is a matter for regret that the occupation should have been carried out, because the wish to avert it might have led to similar concessions being made. There would not, in that case, have been the drawbacks we now have to face in the fact that our power to exert pressure is counterbalanced by our financial dependence; we need our Allies more than they fear us, and our general authority is consequently diminished.

But we cannot go back to the situation as it was in 1922, and must take the existing state of affairs as our starting point. The Ruhr must be negotiated, not simply evacuated ; we must never lose sight of the fact that it is of very little value to us as security unless we can make a bargain over it, and it ought to be regarded exclusively as a means to that end. Before we withdraw our troops, we must secure Germany's definite acceptance of the heavy sacrifice the Experts' decision will impose on her, a settlement of the inter-Allied debts, and a settlement of the question of security, which ought to be guided by the following three principles : [1] (1) *The mere fact of a guarantee not being voluntarily agreed to by Germany would deprive it of some of its value.* Hence the necessity for providing for a certain amount of reciprocity in the measures of control to be put in force.[2] Moreover, they should be entrusted to the League of Nations, and reciprocity is the essence of its activities. (2) The criterion of military security for France —in so far as it depends on technical stipulations—is *the possibility of conveying her troops to the Rhine before the Germans can cross the river.* This would not necessarily involve our continuing to occupy the Rhinelands. All that is needed is that the demilitarization of the provinces should be insured, and that we should be in a position to destroy the roads by which the Germans would advance, in case of invasion. (3) This demilitarization must be *controlled by an international organization.* The European character of the system would make it more tolerable to Germany, whilst, on the other hand, the fact that she could not attack France without acting in defiance of the nations represented, would make her hesitate, and, if she still ventured to do so, would facilitate the action to be taken by the League. All

[1] There is no question here of new ideas. The two first principles were formulated in General Spears's British proposal, and the third by Painlevé (in an article in *L'Europe Nouvelle*) and by General Gouraud.

[2] No doubt Germany has not the same reason for fearing " aggression " as France. But the Pact signed ought to satisfy her legitimate wish to be protected against isolated and arbitrary sanctions. On the other hand, the international *surveillance* of the Rhinelands ought not necessarily to have a counterpart in *surveillance* of Alsace-Lorraine, as certain people in England seem to think, for no treaty provides for this, and, moreover, the geographical situation is not the same. But disarmament and the control of disarmament ought to be general.

this does not make it the less incumbent on us to rely primarily on the latter. Frontiers are but symbols, hegemonies may be established by indirect means; the only certain guarantees of peace are moral guarantees.

Moral Evolution.

This urgent political problem must be provisionally distinguished from the moral problem. *But statesmen will only succeed in the difficult task of re-establishing peace if a spiritual evolution provides them with the necessary psychological possibilities, and this higher work cannot be expected of a Government or a Party.* It requires a great deal of courage to combat old prejudices—more than we can expect of our Parliamentarians. Did not Poincaré's opponents avoid any discussion of foreign policy until the time when the fall in the exchange made it a domestic problem? But, on the other hand, silent opposition to the Government's foreign policy has been evident, for some years past, amongst many liberal-minded men and many intelligent students of politics—officials, intellectuals, business men, and financiers. Even amongst our representatives in foreign countries there is frequently a great distinction between the private views held and those officially represented, and it is heart-breaking to such men, as patriots, to see the disastrous effects of the instructions they have faithfully carried out in their official capacity.

Could a policy be thus pursued for long in opposition to the feeling of the educated classes of the nation? If so, it would be a sign of its real decadence. Those who represent the French spirit of criticism do not venture to act now, because politics seem to them to be controlled by economic and sentimental forces, in whose midst opinion plays no more part than the sea foam, visible when the waves form it into a crest. And yet, between the partial Government and the people it dupes, they alone can grasp the complexity of the facts, and the consistency between their opinions and the reality guarantees the future being in their hands. Those who will take the initiative in starting intellectual reform will one day find the political

herd following them—perhaps unconsciously—and the historian attributing its remarkable evolution to their individual effort.

The future we hope for will at first be embodied in a few leaders. *They will teach us to transport our victory to a higher plane, where we shall be free to develop it without any fear of being deprived of it by force. They will remind us that it requires us to exert a civilizing influence, that it only gives us ascendancy, initiative, power to anticipate the future and shape Europe in accordance with her deep aspirations, for a short time, and that unless we use these powers they will be taken from us.* They will repeat what Carlyle said as to no conquest being great except the conquest of new ideas. They will be able to deliver the great spiritual forces of the nation from the errors into which they have fallen.

Victory.

Through their efforts alone, the great confusion in which we are living can be reduced to order. Science and patriotism will have their separate domains. It will be possible to distinguish the mistakes of the Governments from the sentimental values with which they are invested, from the religion professed in order to conceal them. In particular—this is an important point—it will be possible to deal with the question of Government responsibility for the war of 1914 as a thing in itself, apart from patriotism —as also from the payment of reparation, which is legitimate independently of it, and which it embitters.

On the 2nd of August, 1914, the diplomats' work was ended. How could the soldiers have appreciated it? They only knew that their country was in danger, that a hard task was before them in which each must take his share, and that it can never be a mistake to defend one's native soil. The mistakes made by the Chancelleries did not detract in the least from the value of what these men gave. Some of us indeed may even think that its having been associated with a more comprehensive sacrifice, with common human suffering caused by general mistakes, gives it a still nobler sense, and that in this way the war seems

to have been a first sign of human fraternity. Moreover, the Allied combatants sanctified it by substituting splendid aims for its mediocre causes. Born of rivalry between Governments, it has tended to unite them. *At the same time, the defection of Tsarist Russia, and the entrance of the United States into the war, gave the combined effort of the Allies the character it had lacked at first of a struggle between democracy and militarism. Here we have the real justification of the victory.*

If we have remained faithful to this spirit, we can assert with confidence that it has been a benefit to the world. A German triumph, which would not in itself have been any more final than any other victory of might, and which would have led to fresh coalitions, until it could be avenged, would have reduced the Germans themselves to servitude. As resplendent conquerors, they would not have been able to escape from an absolutely material atmosphere. The League of Nations might have been formed, but it would have been composed of satellites. A nobler ideal was one of the factors of France's success, and gives her the right to *a deep and solemn feeling of pride in it, inseparable from the memory of the sacrifices it exacted, and from clear consciousness of the duties it has imposed upon us.*

The dead must not be made to speak as we please, as in the Dominican speeches of 1923, nor must they be formed into a Party, or regarded as partisans of a political system they were obliged to defend with their country. We must remember that their collective message to us, if it had to be summed up in a few words, would be that there must never be a repetition of the carnage. We know that, according to history, they did not go to war against war, but in their hearts they did, and whether they succeeded in killing it or not must depend upon us.

After so many wrongs done to them, France must now choose her destiny, in accordance with their advice. Does she want one of those mutilated statues carried off from Greece, with wings, but no head, which seem to have lost their way in space because they had no aim to guide them, to be emblematical of her victory? Or the one of which Paul Boncour once spoke, found buried in the

soil of France, with the face of a Minerva, and holding an olive branch? Or, better still, the perfect goddess to be seen in our capital? The proportions of the limbs and features are typical of Reason: the wind of triumph blows the light drapery closely round the figure, faithfully outlining its exact form; its impetus brings her back to earth. Let us trust that, similarly, victorious France may rise above her victory, that success may only serve to show better what she really is, and that when the clouds of illusion in which she had lost her way are finally dispelled she may face the stern realities.

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